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POS APPLAUDS HOUSE INSURANCE COMMITTEE ACTION

Democrat, Republican Chairmen Seek Common Ground on Vital Healthcare Issues

HARRISBURG (December 5, 2007) – The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society President Jon B. Tucker, MD today said a bipartisan effort in the House Insurance Committee demonstrates “True leadership for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians.”

Today, the House Insurance Committee amended, then reported to the full House SB 1137, a legislative vehicle designed to extend the Mcare Abatement Program. The bipartisan vote came after the Committee chairmen announced that they had reached an accord with each other and Gov. Rendell to negotiate a compromise on legislation to extend the Mcare Abatement Program, to retire the Mcare Fund, and to provide healthcare insurance to Pennsylvania’s uninsured citizens.

Enacted in 2003, the Mcare Abatement Program has done more than any other individual measure enacted since 2002 to keep specialty surgeons such as orthopaedic

surgeons practicing in Pennsylvania. The Mcare Abatement Program provides 100% abatement for high-risk specialty surgeons and 50% abatement for all other physicians from the state mandated, state-run excess medical liability insurance fund.

“We are gratified that the Insurance Committee has acted in a bipartisan manner to move the legislative process forward and to begin a dialogue aimed at resolving these vital issues,” Dr. Tucker said. “The House Democratic and Republican leadership should be commended for leaving aside political rhetoric and working toward solutions that protect the Commonwealth’s physicians and the patients in our care.”

Dr. Tucker recognized Committee Majority Vice Chairman Dan Frankel (D-Allegheny) and Republican Chairman Nicholas Micozzie (R-Delaware) for their willingness to establish what Chairman Micozzie described as “trust” among the two legislative caucuses and the Governor’s Office. In addition, he singled out House Majority Policy Committee Chair Todd Eachus (D-Luzerne) and House Republican Leader Sam Smith as demonstrating the kind of leadership that is necessary to move the legislative process forward and resolve these issues.

“True leadership was demonstrated today in Harrisburg, the kind of leadership that produces results for the Commonwealth’s citizens. Governor Rendell and the House Democratic and Republican leadership teams set aside the tiresome and toxic, self-interested rhetoric that the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) and other special interest groups have been spewing for the last two weeks and they decided that now is the time for solutions,” Dr. Tucker said. “The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society stands ready to work closely with the House and the Governor’s Office for the benefit of the patients our members serve.”

HB 1973, Rep. Josh Shapiro's (D-Montgomery) legislation to extend the Mcare Abatement Program was reported from the House Insurance Committee on November 20th, but with the limited number of legislative days before the program's expiration, the House turned to SB 1137 as a vehicle. The POS supports HB 1973 and Rep. Shapiro's efforts to gain its passage.

Yesterday the House Republican Caucus announced their plan for expanding healthcare insurance coverage in Pennsylvania. Reps. Steven Nickol (R-York) and Scott Boyd (R-Lancaster) will be leading this effort.

"We look forward to working with Reps. Eachus, Frankel, Shapiro, Micozzie, Nichol and Boyd to accomplish great things for Pennsylvania's citizens and the physicians who care for them," Dr. Tucker added.

POS is a professional medical specialty organization representing more than 900 orthopaedic surgeons across Pennsylvania in advocating for excellence in the practice of orthopaedic medicine. For more information on the importance of bone, joint and muscle health at every age, visit the POS website at www.paorthosociety.org.

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