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### **MCARE EXTENSION PRESERVES PATIENT CARE**

**HARRISBURG (December 15, 2005)** – Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society President Joshua Port, M.D. of Altoona today applauded the Senate and the House for enacting legislation to extend the state’s MCARE abatement program through 2006.

“Patients in need of emergency care and other specialty medical care across the state are the beneficiaries of MCARE abatement because that program has been the critical component for long-term relief during the medical liability crisis in Pennsylvania,” Port said. “While medical liability insurance rates continue to increase for high-risk specialty surgeons, MCARE abatement has been the stabilizing force allowing many surgeons to continue practicing in Pennsylvania.”

Port thanked legislative leaders for swiftly forging a consensus on the bill’s language. He noted that the final version of the legislation begins a focus on addressing the unfunded liability of the MCARE Fund. The MCARE Fund is a state-mandated and state run excess medical liability insurance fund for doctors and hospitals. Act 13 of 2002 provided for a gradual phase-out of the fund shifting the coverage away from the state fund and into the commercial market. That shift must include a plan for financing the so-called “tail” or unfunded liability of claims that remain in the pipeline after the fund is permanently retired.

In a unanimous vote yesterday, the Senate passed House Bill 2041, sponsored by Rep. Steven Nickol (R-York), but not before amending it to include the creation of a commission to develop recommendations to retire the unfunded liabilities of the MCARE Fund and to issue a report by November 15, 2006. The bill was similar to Senate Bill 972, which was introduced by Sen. John C. Rafferty, Jr. (R-Chester).

The House today unanimously concurred to the Senate amendments to HB 2041 and sent the bill to the Governor who is expected to sign the legislation. The MCARE Abatement program was set to expire December 31.

“The situation has definitely stabilized in Pennsylvania where important aspects of reform have been enacted through Act 13 of 2002 and Venue reform,” Port said. “With continued MCARE Abatement we are avoiding another year-end crisis of potential closings of trauma centers, while we continue to explore additional medical liability reforms.”

“The MCARE Abatement extension gives us an opportunity to bring together everyone who cares about the future of healthcare in Pennsylvania to work toward avoiding another medical liability crisis and find ways to deliver affordable high quality medical care to all Pennsylvanians,” he added.

POS is a professional medical specialty organization representing more than 900 orthopaedic surgeons across Pennsylvania. For more information, visit the POS website at [www.paorthosociety.org](http://www.paorthosociety.org).

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