

Lawsuit reform legislation will create jobs

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Brad Henry's signature of a historic lawsuit reform bill will create jobs, draw new businesses to Oklahoma and increase health care accessibility, a State Chamber of Oklahoma official said.

"This bill is the most important piece of work for the business community to come out of Oklahoma in a long time," said Mike Seney, senior vice president of operations at the State Chamber. "This comprehensive package will create jobs, increase health care accessibility in all corners of the state and show outside companies that Oklahoma is open for business."

Contained in the legislation is an array of strong improvements to the state's justice system, Seney said.

He singled out class action reforms, a cap on appeals bonds, adoption of summary judgment similar to that allowed in federal lawsuits, joint and several liability reforms; product liability reforms; junk science testimony rules; certificates of merit and a cap on non-economic damages.

Seney said a recent study by the free-market San Francisco-based think tank Pacific Research Institute showed that America's legal system imposes a cost of \$9,800 per family.

Those costs include annual damage awards, plaintiffs' attorney fees, defense costs, defensive medicine, rise in health care costs and travel expenses to find a physician.

"This bill is especially important for rural areas that

may not have good access to physicians," Seney said. "We've seen doctors head to Texas because of our current system."

"At the same time, communities large and small, urban and rural will see a less litigious society, which allows businesses to hire more employees and new businesses to invest in our state."

"This bill gives Oklahoma more momentum in an economic climate when we need it. Not only does this bill put us on par with surrounding states, it allows us to pass them."

Seney said the bill was written so Oklahomans who have truly been wronged and deserve their day in court will see a more efficient judicial system, free of frivolous law-

suits that slowed justice.

"We at the State Chamber have put years of hard work into lawsuit reform and we congratulate our Legislature and Gov. Henry for stepping up this year and improving our state for decades to come," Seney said.

Representing more than 2,000 Oklahoma businesses, the State Chamber of Oklahoma has been the state's leading advocate for business since 1926.

For more information, visit

www.okstatechamber.com.