

From the Atlanta Business Chronicle

:http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/blog/capitol_vision/2013/09/poll-backs-medical-tort-reform.html

Sep 26, 2013, 12:53pm EDT

Poll backs medical tort reform



[Dave Williams](#)

Staff Writer- Atlanta Business Chronicle

A poll released this week shows strong support among Georgia voters for legislation overhauling the state's medical tort system.

But a group representing trial lawyers criticized the statewide telephone survey as a "push" poll aimed at steering respondents to give answers the bill's backers wanted.

The poll of 800 likely general voters in early August found 63 percent in favor of reforming the current medical malpractice liability system, which uses the courts to adjudicate claims and award compensation.

Only a slightly smaller majority – 61 percent – said they favored the specific bill before the General Assembly to establish a system in which an independent medical review board would determine whether negligence has occurred and a second board would fix patient compensation within six to nine months of the filing of a claim.

"Georgians are telling us they want something that will reduce health-care costs and will compensate patients quickly and fairly," said [John McLaughlin](#), founder of McLaughlin & Associates, which conducted the poll on behalf of Patients for Fair Compensation, an Alpharetta-based nonprofit that has lobbied for the bill during the last two legislative sessions.

"This should be easy for Georgia lawmakers to embrace," he said.

But [Chris Kelleher](#), spokesman for the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association, said the wording of the questions influenced respondents' answers.

"In addition to being biased, deceptive and altogether misleading, the questions asked in this poll are gross mischaracterizations of the facts," he said. "This special interest-funded propaganda is as close to being a legitimate poll as their proposal is to being constitutional."

The poll's methodology appeared to be sound. For example, polltakers interviewed a mix of cellphone users and respondents with landline phones.

They also talked to a representative mix of respondents by age, race and gender, and interviewed equal proportions of Republicans and Democrats.

The poll's margin of error was plus- or minus 3.4 percent.

Dave Williams covers Government