

Committee of Ten Thousand

Advocates for Persons with HIV/AIDS

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June 21, 2001

Hon. John D. Dingell, Ranking
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Dingell:

The Committee of Ten Thousand is very pleased that a Patients' Bill of Rights bill is now on the fast track. Please know you have our fullest support. As you know, the Committee of Ten Thousand represents persons with hemophilia who contracted AIDS from their medicine -- about 10,000 persons and their families. From the time Congress assisted us by charging the Institute of Medicine with studying our situation, in 1994, until December of last year, when we finally saw the Ricky Ray Hemophilia Relief Fund Law fully funded, a period of six YEARS elapsed. Despite our community's strongest efforts, this was the time required for even a group of thousands of victims to obtain redress from this devastating example of laissez-faire, including FDA's failure to require producers of medicine to adopt the latest in techniques for purifying their product. If it took us that long, imagine how a single head of household going up against an HMO has fared.

We are saddened to note the Administration's constant references, in discussing Patients' Rights legislation, to "frivolous" lawsuits and "excessive" judgements. Since no line is drawn between these and "appropriate" lawsuits and "fair" judgements, we must conclude that the President is saying ALL patient litigation is frivolous and judgements excessive. This language we might expect from a health industry spokesman, but coming from our President, it sends shivers down one's spine.

Again, thank you for committing to such early action on the bill, and we stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,



David Cavanaugh
Government Relations

