



For Immediate Release

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WLF CONVERSATIONS WITH Examines Legal Reform Benefits

In a publication released today by the Washington Legal Foundation (WLF), two United States Governors and one of America's top proponents of legal reform discuss the significant benefits such reforms offer to state economies and to the health and well-being of all Americans.

This publication is the latest installment of WLF's CONVERSATIONS WITH series. Participating in the conversation were West Virginia **Governor Joe Manchin**; Mississippi **Governor Haley Barbour**; and Chairman of the American Justice Partnership **Steven Hantler**. The questions were presented by **Dick Thornburgh**, who has moderated each publication in the series. He is Chairman of WLF's Legal Policy Advisory Board and Of Counsel to the law firm Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis LLP. Mr. Thornburgh is a former two-term Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and former Attorney General of the United States.

The discussion's participants first focus on the types of legal reforms that West Virginia and Mississippi have adopted, what motivated the Governors' efforts, and why support for such changes is increasingly bipartisan in nature. On this later point, participant Steven Hantler notes that most political leaders now "realize that if their states have an unfair legal climate that favors plaintiffs, business will slow down investments that create new jobs and expand operations."

Next, the Governors and Mr. Hantler examine the process of reform, narrowing in on the importance of educating the public and working with those who are most directly affected by litigation abuse. Governor Manchin stresses the need for compromise and the willingness to be flexible on what constitutes "success" in order to develop a broader coalition of supporters. Both Governor Barbour and Mr. Hantler emphasize the value in having business leaders explain the benefits of legal reform to both their employees and their elected representatives.

The discussion then turns to the benefits of legal reform, with Governor Manchin urging proponents of future reforms to offer tangible improvements when selling legislative change to the public. He points to reductions in insurance premiums and the return to the state of certain insurers as key fruits of West Virginia's reforms. Governor Barbour demonstrates equally clear benefits, such as doctors returning to Mississippi to practice in areas once seen as too risky, and the locating of new business production plants within the state. He also notes how critical the improved legal climate was in the state's recovery from the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

The conversation concludes with the Governors offering lessons that they have learned in pursuing tort reform to other policy makers in other states. Steven Hantler also adds a message to those in the business community who advocate reform – legal reforms, and the elected officials willing to advance them, are worthy of continued support, and such continued support is crucial to maintain gains and seeking more benefits for free enterprise and consumers for years to come.

Copies of this educational paper can be obtained by forwarding a request to: Publications Department, Washington Legal Foundation, 2009 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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