

# Senate passes measure revising workers' comp

By Barbara Hoberock - *Tulsa World*  
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Critics of a Republican-sponsored measure billed as workers' compensation reform say it could reduce an injured worker's access to medical care.

Senate Bill 878 passed the Senate on Thursday by a vote of 44-0 with no debate. It heads to the House.

It would reduce what doctors get paid to treat injured workers by tying rates to 120 percent of Medicare. Treatment would be controlled by the Official Disability Guidelines for workers' compensation.

Gov. Mary Fallin supports the measure and asked for swift approval in the House.

Medicare doesn't cover the cost of treatment, said Dr. William Gillock, who practices occupational medicine in Tulsa. "We are concerned it would eliminate access to care and affect the quality of care we can provide," he said.

Sen. Patrick Anderson, R-Enid, the bill's Senate author, said the reimbursement rate now is determined by the workers' compensation court administrator and is not tied to a structure.

"What we have done is tie them to 120 percent of what the Medicare rates are, so this would pay them 20 percent markup of what they are getting for Medicare patients, he said.

But he said the measure would reduce what workers' compensation doctors are currently getting. "They are charging in some cases three or four times what Medicare rates are for services," he said.

The measure also would require that treatment be controlled by the Official Disability Guidelines for workers' compensation.

Anderson said Texas and Kansas use the Official Disability Guidelines. Oklahoma has the fourth-highest workers' compensation premiums charged in the nation, while Kansas is 42nd, Anderson said.

The Oklahoma State Medical Association and the Oklahoma Hospital Association also have concerns about the bill, group representatives said.