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EDITORIALS

Pass open records changes

On our letters page today, the Senate is urged to approve a House-passed bill that would put more sunshine on the disciplinary procedure for physicians in this state. The legislation deserves approval as does a similar proposal for South Carolina veterinarians.

At this point, the change in the rules governing complaints against physicians has a better chance of becoming law than increased public access to complaints against vets, even though the proposals started out much the same.

Unfortunately, the House removed a provision for increased access to vet board records before it passed a comprehensive veterinarian practice bill. Sen. Larry Grooms of Bonneau is spearheading an effort to add the provision to the comprehensive vet bill now on the contested Senate calendar. Actually, Sen. Grooms tells us he is holding up the legislation in hopes of

getting a compromise that stands a chance of passage.

The senator has been working with a Mount Pleasant housewife, Marcia Rosenberg, who has spent the past several years trying to ensure that other pet owners wouldn't face the stonewall she first encountered when she filed a complaint after botched surgery on her kitten. She persevered in that case and after other complaints were filed, the veterinarian involved agreed to close his practice.

As Bill Rogers of the S.C. Press Association notes in his letter, medical groups haven't opposed the effort to balance the protection of physicians against unfounded complaints with the public's right of access to complaints that the medical board takes seriously enough to call for a hearing. The same should be true of veterinary medicine.