

Put more lifesaving equipment on planes

■ **Our stand:** Heed Shreveport doctor's plea

A Shreveport surgeon has cut through red tape to save lives on airline flights.

Dr. John Knight's persistence and dedication to his effort has improved medical equipment on jetliners and prompted Congress to pass the Aviation Medical Assistance Act.

This crusade of Knight shows when a good citizen has a good cause, mountains may be moved — at least those in the halls of government in Washington, D.C., and the corporate boardrooms of major airlines.

The act breezed through the Capitol and is now awaiting the president's signature. It upgrades medical equipment aboard airplanes and increases the medical training of flight attendants.

President Bill Clinton should sign the act and push regulators to enforce it. It makes airplanes better

equipped to handle in-flight emergencies, such as the one Knight responded to last December.

While on a flight to Miami, Knight assisted in attempts to save a passenger who suffered cardiac arrest and later died. Knight says the passenger's life might have been saved if the airplane had other medical equipment, including a defibrillator, on board.

Knight's story gained national attention, and Congress responded with the new act.

Five airline carriers already have answered Knight's plea by equipping their planes with needed equipment.

All airlines should heed the Shreveport doctor's request, without prodding from the federal government under the new act. If they comply, then emergency medical care in the skies may save lives just as it does on the ground.