



85th Texas Legislature

Legislative Issues and News Update

February 24, 2017

The Texas Legislature convened January 10th and will be in Austin until May 29. During those 140 days, legislators will make decisions that profoundly impact long term care in Texas. Throughout the session, the Texas Health Care Association team will work to make sure the voices of long term care providers and friends are heard while also keeping you informed on the activities of the Legislature. Stay tuned to these communications for the latest information on what is happening at the State Capitol.

Legislation

Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) has filed legislation to place a **moratorium on new Medicaid beds**—a major item in the Texas Health Care Association’s legislative agenda.

Senate Bill 890 will suspend the allocation and certification of new Medicaid beds for a four-year period, beginning on Sept. 1, 2017. Exceptions would be made for facilities under development, small house facilities, replacement beds, and in counties where the occupancy rate rises above 85%.

If passed, the legislation could help nursing facilities to address their workforce needs while giving the state a chance to plan for the challenges of an aging population.

[CLICK HERE TO READ SB 890](#)

A bill establishing a **Nursing Facility Reimbursement Allowance (NFRA)** is likely to be filed next week. Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa, who is Vice Chair of the Finance Committee, will carry it in the Senate. Rep. J.D. Sheffield, a physician from Gatesville, will file the bill in the House.

The NFRA would allow facilities to enhance their rates with federal dollars in a program that is similar to those used in 44 states.

Budget

Subcommittees working on the Health & Human Services budgets for each of the Legislature’s two budget writing committees—Senate Finance and House Appropriations—met throughout this week.

The House's panel took public testimony on Thursday. THCA President and CEO Kevin Warren that underfunding long term care is driving record staff turnover in Texas. He also said that the growing gap between expenses and reimbursement is hurting the quality of care.

The subcommittees will make recommendations to the full committee within the next few weeks.

Bills of Interest and Hearings this week:

The House Public Health Committee will meet at 8 a.m. on Tuesday. Among the bills they will take up is HB 280, which would establish a grant program for reducing workplace violence against nurses.

[SEE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE AGENDA HERE](#)

[READ HB 280 HERE](#)

The Senate Health & Human Services Committee will meet on Wednesday at 8 a.m.

[SEE HHS COMMITTEE AGENDA HERE](#)

Subcommittees for Senate Finance and House Appropriations will continue their deliberations throughout the week.

Bills Filed

[HB 2025 \(Y. Davis\)](#)-- Relating to staff requirements for certain facilities that provide care to persons with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

[HB 2116 \(Klick\) and SB 924 \(Perry\)](#)—Relating to informal dispute resolutions for violations of health and safety standards at certain long-term care facilities.

[SB 932 \(Schwertner\)](#)— Relating to the licensing of, the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission's duties with respect to, and the administrative penalties for certain long-term care facilities.

[SB 934 \(Schwertner\)](#)- Relating to health care liability insurance for certain long-term care facilities.

**Join our weekly Legislative
Briefing calls.**

Every Monday

2:30pm to 3:00pm CST

Number: 1.888.721.8686

Code: 9766950

Capitol Visitors:

Representatives of SAVA Senior Care, Diversicare Management Services—North Texas Region, and Senior Care Centers came to the Capitol over the last two weeks to ask their legislators to support THCA's legislative agenda.

Next week, representatives from Cascade Health Services and StoneGate Senior Living will visit state leaders.

It is vital that providers come to the Capitol to spread to advocate for long term care this session. Legislators need to hear from their constituents on these key issues.

Please let Scot Kibbe know if you are interested in advocating on behalf of long term care this session and he will be able to provide you current information and materials for your visits. He can be reached at 512-458-1257 or skibbe@txhca.org.

You can find who represents you and his or her contact information at:

<http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us>



SAVA facility administrators April Harkness Baltazar and Jason Hicks met with Rep. Nicole Collier (D-Fort Worth).



Senator Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville) with SAVA representatives.



Diversicare representatives shared their insights with an aide to Rep. Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston).

This Week in Texas History

February 24, 1836—William Barrett Travis penned his famous letter from the Alamo, pledging to “never surrender or retreat” and swearing “Victory or Death.”

[READ TRAVIS' LETTER HERE](#)

February 24, 1885—Chester Nimitz, who would serve as a fleet admiral of the US Navy during World War II, was born in Fredericksburg.

