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Gohmert pressures Bush into repealing cut

By WES FERGUSON

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The Bush administration has restored \$770 million for nursing home care after a bipartisan push by members of the U.S. Congress, including Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Tyler.

The restored funds include \$45.6 million for elderly Texans in long-term care, said Tim Graves, president of the nonprofit Texas Health Care Association.

"The looming cut that was going to be handed down by administrative action was a substantial hit to Texas, as well as many other states," Graves said. "It's critical for Texas. We have a lot of health care needs."

The proposed regulation, by the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, would have cut Medicare-funded nursing home care by \$5 billion over the next five years and \$770 million in fiscal year 2009, Graves said.

Senators and representatives wrote letters urging Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt not to cut the funds, and the administration announced Friday that it would not reduce them in 2009.

In a written statement, Gohmert said, "Those who can help themselves, should. But those who reside in our nursing homes and skilled care facilities cannot help themselves. I have seen what can happen to those who are in facilities without adequate staffing.

"Late in their lives, my two grandmothers were both in such facilities, one on Medicare and one not. When money is cut, our most vulnerable seniors suffer from a lack of staffing and, therefore, a lack of attention. I have seen unspeakable conditions develop that no person should ever have to endure.

"Cuts in federal spending should be made in areas where people can help themselves, but not to nursing homes simply because those suffering there cannot speak for themselves. I represent and speak for them, too."

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