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## **CHAMBER NOTEPAD: Deficit decisions impact community**



Paul Hooper is executive director of the Corsicana/Navarro County Chamber of Commerce.

**(<http://corsicanadailysun.com/news/x1348437602/CHAMBER-NOTEPAD-Deficit-decisions-impact-community>)**

**By Paul Hooper**  
**Corsicana Daily Sun (<http://corsicanadailysun.com>)**

Corsicana —

This past week I met with some Chamber members who own and operate nursing homes, Mollie Smith with Senator Brian Birdwell's office and the Navarro County Republican Party Chair, Frank Steed. Representatives from Navarro Regional Hospital, Country Meadows, Heritage Oaks, Heritage Oaks West, Twilight Homes and our neighbors from Ennis Home Care also attended this meeting to talk about HB1 that proposes a 33% funding cut to the Medicaid program.

As I have stated before I am following what I can in Austin about what the budget deficit and decisions made will impact in our community and each of us in one way or another. The proposed cuts to Medicaid will have an impact on all of us as tax payers, business owners, city and county tax revenue, sales tax revenue, those with family members currently receiving Medicaid services as well as those with no family members on Medicaid.

I am presenting this information from the Texas Health Care Association for all us, but mainly for those with family members currently in nursing homes that may not be aware of or fully understand the ramifications of cuts to Medicaid funding.

Although Texas is facing enormous economic, social and demographic challenges, we must preserve senior's quality care, protect good local jobs and sustain the quality skilled nursing and rehab facilities that are a mainstay of our local communities.

The average Medicaid rate paid in Texas for resident care is \$126 per day and dropping. That ranks

Texas' Medicaid payment levels for skilled nursing care at 49th in the nation.

The HHSC's Consolidated Budget for 2012-2013 estimates that an increase of \$227 million (\$89.5 million in General Revenue) is needed to meet the cost of providing Texas' Medicaid financed nursing home care. However, the two patient care rate cuts being implemented in 2011 amount to \$56.9 million less in funding (\$19.8 million General Revenue).

The average nursing facility in Texas is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; has 108 beds; employs 114 staff; has 30,776 square feet of space; has annual staff turnover rates that equal to 95% for RN's, 93% for LVN's and 123% for CAN's.

Each day, Texas's skilled nursing and rehab facilities provide personalized nursing and convalescent care, specialized rehabilitation and acute care services to their live-in residents. The provision of this range of care services includes room and board, meals, housekeeping, laundry, medical equipment, medications and other continued around-the-clock support.

The average nursing facility in Texas serves 86 residents with 57 on Medicaid Pay, 17 on Private Pay and 12 on Medicare Pay. In the face of continued severe budgetary challenges, we must work together to ensure every Texas senior is protected, and every taxpayer is respected by pursuing an intelligent eldercare policy every Texas citizen can, and should, be proud of. We need to let our representatives who we elected know how we feel and make recommendations for positive changes so that they can better serve us, their constituents. Go to [www.txhca.org](http://www.txhca.org) for more information on how and who to contact in Austin to voice your opinion.

The quality, cost and accessibility of health care services provided to Texans continues to be one of the most important public policy issues. While federal reform will change many dynamics of health care, currently most Texans under the age of 65 obtain health care services through employer-sponsored health insurance plans. Also, businesses pay 62 percent of the combined state and local taxes. Thus, employers have a major stake in how efficiently and effectively the coordination, management and supply of health care services is being rendered in Texas, and how the demand for these services is being met.

On Friday, February 25th the Chamber along with Hayden Financial Partners and the Human Resource group of Corsicana co-sponsored a seminar on Employee Benefits: What you don't know CAN hurt you! This seminar was well attended and very informative. The seminar covered compliance responsibilities and what an employer must do every day to remain in compliance. How do all the employee benefit laws work together, when do they work separately? How does an employer keep up? The Chamber looks forward to bringing more of the information seminars to our Chamber members and community.

Our Navarro County Day in Austin trip will take place on Thursday, March 10th. We are excited to be able to offer a discounted cost of \$40 per person this year. The cost of the trip includes transportation to and from Austin, a light breakfast served on the bus and a buffet style lunch at The Capitol Grill. We will stop for dinner at a restaurant on the way home; however, this expense is not included in the cost of the trip.

What's coming Up?

March 1st –Ribbon Cutting & Grand Opening – Texas Neighborhood Services Early Head Start Center from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. – Ribbon Cutting at 1:00 p.m.- 1009 W. 13th Ave.

March 1st – Ribbon Cutting – Bottle Shop – 5:30 p.m.

March 10th – Navarro County Day in Austin

March 21st – 26th – Navarro County Youth Expo

March 30th – Navarro College’s Career Expo

If you know of any events going on in our community, I invite you to add it to the Chamber’s Events Calendar at [www.corsicana.org](http://www.corsicana.org). The Chamber website averages 40,000 plus visits per month with the Events Calendar being the Number One page viewed every month (approx. 10,000 views). People want to know what is going on and what there is to do here in our community and you can tell from the number of visits to our website that a lot of people look to the Chamber to find information.

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