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Texas Eldercare Poll: 57 Percent Less Likely to Back Local Legislator if They Oppose Medicaid Rate Boost

Texas Health Care Association Raising Profile of Key Issue Impacting Texas Seniors' Access to Quality Nursing Home Care

Austin, TX (June 2, 2008) – With just more than five months until the November election, a statewide poll of registered Texas voters by Baselice Associates finds 57% of voters less likely to vote for their local state legislator if he or she opposed increasing the amount the state pays nursing homes for Medicaid resident care. GOP, Democrat and Independent voters alike, in media markets across the state, back a rate increase.

The data, released today by Texas Health Care Association (THCA), prompted THCA President Tim Graves to say the group “will ensure voters are not only aware Texas’ Medicaid rates are the 49th lowest in the nation – and fails to pay the daily rate the State *itself* says is necessary to care for Texas’ oldest, most needy citizens – but also which lawmakers are helping to ensure this ongoing Medicaid funding crisis is properly rectified by state government.”

While 57% of Texas voters are less likely to support their local state legislator if they opposed boosting seniors’ Medicaid rates, 22% are more likely to do so. 12% say it makes no difference; 9% were unsure or refused. The Baselice Associates poll of 801 registered Texas voters was conducted 4/30-5/4, and has an error margin of +/- 3.5%. On a statewide basis by media market, the poll finds:

<u>Media Market</u>	<u>Less Likely</u>	<u>More Likely</u>	<u>No Dif/Unsure</u>
Dallas-Ft.Worth	55%	22%	22%
Houston	59%	18%	24%
Aus/Waco/Bryan	58%	21%	21%
San Ant/South/El Paso	55%	27%	18%
West Texas	56%	25%	19%
East Texas	63%	17%	21%

Voter I.D.

Solid GOP	47%	25%	28%
Broad Independent	59%	22%	19%
Solid Dem	67%	18%	15%

Graves noted that one key objective of the survey – the most extensive ever conducted by THCA specific to long term care issues – was to ascertain the extent to which Texas voters support the need to raise the average daily Medicaid rate to that which the State itself says is necessary to properly care for nursing home residents -- which is approximately \$120 per patient, per day -- according to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

To assess this matter, the poll asked the following question:

As you may know, Medicaid is a healthcare program funded through a state and federal partnership to provide services to low income people, with the Texas Legislature providing 40% of the funding for Medicaid and the federal government providing 60%. Medicaid pays for the daily care of 60,000 Texans in nursing homes

throughout the state. The State of Texas determines what Medicaid will pay nursing homes for each patient covered by Medicaid, which is currently about \$106 per day. Would you favor or oppose increasing the amount of Medicaid money the state pays nursing homes for the care they provide these residents to a level that covers the actual cost of caring for Medicaid residents as determined by the state?

Favor increasing Medicaid rate to meet costs as determined by state: 74%
Oppose increasing Medicaid rate to meet costs as determined by state: 20%

Voter I.D.

Solid GOP:	65% Favor	27% Oppose
Broad Ind:	73% Favor	19% Oppose
Solid Dem:	81% Favor	12% Oppose

In conducting the extensive survey, Graves said now is precisely the right time to energize a discussion about how to strengthen long term care in Texas. "With Medicaid financing a joint state-federal responsibility, the Texas long term care profession is urging incumbent state lawmakers as well as their challengers to take a hard look at the fact that while the average national daily Medicaid rate per patient is \$153.83, the Texas rate is just \$106.59." (BDO Seidman, other sources)

Even on a regional basis, the THCA President observed, Texas' Medicaid reimbursement rates have fallen behind: New Mexico ranks 30th nationally, at \$137.24; Oklahoma ranks 44th, at \$116.84; Arkansas ranks 47th, at \$111.76; and Louisiana ranks 45th, at \$115.00.

"Texas is a fiscally conservative state, no doubt, but Texans are compassionate and truly care about the health and well-being of our parents and grandparents," Graves said. "It is incumbent upon us to better inform our lawmakers and the public at large about the rising gap between actual facility care costs and Texas' actual Medicaid reimbursement rate. Current policy short-changes the growing care needs of our oldest, sickest, neediest seniors -- and we will aggressively address this worsening problem in the months ahead by proposing positive, constructive solutions."

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Founded in 1950, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) is the largest long term care association in Texas. THCA represents a broad spectrum of long term care providers and professionals offering long term, rehabilitative and specialized health care services. Member facilities, owned by both for-profit and non-profit entities, include nursing facilities, specialized rehabilitation facilities, and assisted living facilities.