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**Deuell Praised for Recognizing Strong Nursing Homes
Can Prevent Hospital Visits, Save Tax Dollars**

Austin, TX – The Texas Health Care Association (THCA) praised Sen. Robert Deuell (R-Greenville) for his comments on Tuesday, September 16 at the Joint Senate Finance and Senate Health and Human Services Committee hearing in which he linked increased Medicaid funding for nursing home care -- which will better enable facilities to hire and retain additional qualified caregivers – to fewer hospital visits for seniors requiring acute care.

“Senator Deuell’s dialogue with Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Albert Hawkins at yesterday’s hearing underscores how investing in nursing home staffing and quality improvement efforts can actually reduce Texas’ frail and elderly citizens’ acute care needs,” stated Tim Graves, President of THCA. “High quality long term care is preventive care. Improved staffing and quality in nursing facilities resulting from an increase in Medicaid rates that actually reflects the true costs of care will help reduce hospital admissions and unnecessary trips to emergency rooms, and therefore save taxpayer dollars. We commend Senator Deuell for taking a big picture view of Texas’ eldercare policy, and how strengthening nursing homes can yield big dividends to patient and taxpayer alike.”

The following exchange occurred Tuesday between Sen. Deuell and Commissioner Hawkins:

Sen. Deuell: “Is it your opinion that if we increased funding for nursing home care in the sense of higher rates so they can hire better trained and more personnel and we provide better home health care would you expect a decrease in their spending for acute care in overall healthier nursing home and home disabled population. Do you agree with that?”

Commissioner Hawkins: “As a general premise, I certainly do.” (Explains home health example)

Sen. Deuell: “If a nursing home per month is 4 thousand dollars per month...ball park, more or less. Which would come out to 48 thousand dollars a year and any of us that have been a patient in the emergency department; you can spend four thousand dollars filling out the forms, without even getting admitted. And then if someone needs to be admitted..... If you want to save money, you need to look at where we are spending.... looking at other state programs, if we can attack... looking at acute care is 61 % of spending, how much of that can we prevent, Sen. Nelson by improving our nursing home care. As a practicing physician, who has nursing home patients and talking with Administrators, they are very

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frustrated that they cannot do the job they want to do and there has been criticism of that industry....if you keep them out of the ER you can keep them out of the hospital.”

(Source: Senate RealMedia Video Archives 9/17/08)

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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.