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Texas Health Care Association Launches New “Educate ‘08” Effort to Help Focus Needed Attention on Long Term Care Issues, Medicaid Funding Crisis

*Long Term Care Advocacy Group to Invite State House, Senate Candidates
Of Both Parties to Tour Facilities*

Austin, TX (January 30, 2008) – The Texas Health Care Association (THCA) today announced it will launch a new “Educate ‘08” informational effort designed to help both incumbent and prospective state lawmakers of both parties better understand the key issues surrounding the Medicaid funding crisis, and how Texas’ 49th national ranking in terms of Medicaid reimbursement places the care needs of the state’s most vulnerable seniors and disabled citizens at severe risk.

“Now more than ever, it is important to generate a debate this election season about how to strengthen our state’s long term care system for the benefit of Texas’ most vulnerable frail, elderly and disabled citizens, and ‘Educate ‘08’ will be our non-partisan, statewide informational effort to do so,” stated Tim Graves, President of THCA. “The long term care infrastructure seniors depend upon for their care is under severe stress, and as more baby-boomers will require long term care in the years ahead, issues pertaining to eldercare financing require a substantive, high profile debate.”

As the election season unfolds, Graves said THCA will encourage candidates 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 – 49th in the nation – according to independent data from the national accounting firm BDO Seidman, and other sources. Even on a regional basis, he said, Texas is falling 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.

“We are also increasingly alarmed about the fact our state’s Medicaid reimbursement rates have slipped to 49th in the nation – and which simply do not meet the growing complex care needs of our residents. But we also intend to be clear this is not just a discussion about money and rates – it is about maintaining care quality standards and dignity for many seniors in their late 70’s, 80’s and still older,” Graves continued. “The good news, of course, is that Texans are living longer and healthier lives – but the flipside is that an increasingly older population will eventually require more extensive care, and this fact cannot be ignored.”

The first ‘Educate ‘08’ event will take place on Saturday, February 2. Former Mesquite Mayor and current State Rep. candidate Mike Anderson (R-Mesquite) will tour Heritage Place nursing home following a meeting with facility leaders and front-line caregivers. Anderson is campaigning for the 101st District seat which includes Balch Springs, Mesquite and Sunnyvale –

currently held by Rep. Thomas Latham (R-Sunnyvale), who will also be meeting with Heritage Place caregivers and residents later in February. Subsequent tours will be regularly announced.

“It is our responsibility and intent to engage in a positive, issues-driven discussion and dialogue with our lawmakers, and our membership is excited about the opportunity to help raise the profile of many long term care issues that will be debated in 2008 and acted upon by the Legislature in 2009,” concluded Graves.

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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.