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With 2010 Election Less Than Two Weeks Out, Texas Seniors and Caregivers Urged to Press State, Federal Candidates on Eldercare Funding Issues

THCA Says Growing State, Federal Budget Deficit Projections Underscore Importance of Opposing More Cuts to Medicaid, Medicare

Austin, TX – With just less than two weeks before the 2010 election, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) urged seniors and caregivers throughout Texas to press state and federal candidates on eldercare funding issues, and get them on record stating their opposition to any new state or federal Medicaid and Medicare cuts following recent reductions to both programs.

“The \$25.6 million state Medicaid cuts to seniors’ rehabilitation and skilled nursing care that went into effect on September 1st, 2010 -- combined with recently passed federal Medicare cuts of over \$1.5 billion over ten years – clearly threatens to severely undermine the ongoing ability of Texas seniors to access quality care,” warned Tim Graves, President of THCA.

Continued Graves: “With facilities’ staffing stability jeopardized, ongoing quality improvement initiatives put at risk, and good local jobs throughout Texas threatened by the cumulative negative affect of recent state and federal eldercare funding cuts, candidates should be asked for the record whether they will oppose still more cuts when lawmakers resume legislative business in Austin and Washington, D.C. in January, 2011.”

Graves noted that a recent statewide survey from Baselice & Associates (752 RV’s; 7/12-15; 3.5% MoE) found a full 79% of Texans opposed the recent \$25.6 million state Medicaid cuts -- and that 62% would be less likely to vote for their state legislator if they supported it. The survey also found 70% of Republicans, 80% of Independents and 88% of Democrats oppose the state Medicaid funding cuts. (*Complete Data Results Available at txhca.org*)

“With Texas leaders already considering additional reductions in seniors’ Medicaid benefits, and Congress eyeing the possibility of more Medicare cuts, we will be very active in the months ahead explaining how these cumulative cuts undermine seniors’ care,” Graves said. The THCA leader said the ongoing debate surrounding Texas’ eldercare funding policies and budgetary priorities is significant because it will help spotlight how cuts will inhibit facilities’ continued investment in cost effective care, and illogically weaken local facilities’ ability to send growing numbers of seniors home following stays for convalescent and rehabilitative care.

“Any further constraint on access to long term and rehabilitative care resulting from more Medicaid and Medicare funding cuts will simply hurt quality while increasing the utilization of much higher cost acute care services -- including hospital admissions and emergency room visits -- thereby having the opposite effect and increasing costs to taxpayers,” Graves continued. “We plan to vigorously oppose, speak out and hold state and federal lawmakers accountable for any additional cuts to these two vital funding sources that Texas seniors depend on for their quality long term and rehabilitative care needs,” Graves concluded.

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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.