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**THCA Urges President, Federal Lawmakers to Focus on Stabilizing Long Term Care Sector**  
*Texas' Seniors and Nursing Homes Who Care for Them Struggling With Cumulative Cost Squeeze*

**Austin, TX** – Commenting on both parties' State of the Union remarks, the Texas Health Care Association (THCA) today said there will always be a direct correlation between adequate Medicare and Medicaid funding, quality patient care, and the ongoing stability of Texas' long term care workforce, and urged lawmakers to find common ground in 2012 to ensure every Texas senior continues to have ready access to quality long term and post-acute care.

"Meeting Texas seniors' ongoing care needs as well as sustaining a strong workforce and local jobs base is contingent on adequate Medicaid funding levels from Austin in the face of cuts to Medicare in Washington, and we ask our lawmakers in Washington to help ensure quality care for their most vulnerable elderly constituents remains a priority," stated Tim Graves, President of THCA. "With upwards of 70 percent of facility costs related directly to staffing, and with a full 80 to 85 percent of Texas nursing home residents dependent upon either Medicaid or Medicare funding for their care, any additional federal cuts to either key program in the year ahead are simply untenable."

Graves noted that in 2011, Texas nursing homes experienced \$58 million in state Medicaid nursing home cuts -- on top of \$234 million in reduced Medicare-funded nursing home care for Texas seniors -- which represents a 10.4 percent rate reduction for 2012. Prior to these actions, Texas nursing home care had already repeatedly ranked 49th in the nation for Medicaid reimbursement in recent years.

The THCA President said the ongoing provision of quality long term and post-acute care at facilities throughout Texas was, has, and always will be the organization's paramount objective. "The best representative of our true value to consumers is the result of our care itself, and the facilities and caregivers who make it happen. The reason the federal government's own data confirms measurable improvements in nine out of ten quality measures is because of our dedicated workforce, and our mission in 2012 and in the run-up to the 83<sup>rd</sup> regular legislative session must be to sustain successes, and make the facts about quality increasingly known."

"We are confident we can continue to succeed moving forward by articulating our public policy viewpoints and the budgetary facts surrounding them in an honest, positive and constructive manner," Graves continued. "Looking forward, however, we must recognize that ongoing state and federal budgetary austerity will remain a supreme challenge, and places a premium on ensuring lawmakers and every Texas citizen understands our high and unique value in the growing eldercare marketplace."

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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.*