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**Contact:** Tim Graves, (512) 458-1257, [tgraves@txhca.org](mailto:tgraves@txhca.org)  
Rebecca Reid, (410) 212-3843, [rreid@txhca.org](mailto:rreid@txhca.org)

## **Texas Health Care Association: Meeting Texas Seniors' Ongoing Care Needs Threatened by Looming State, Federal Funding Threats**

*Implications of Federal Medicare Cuts Require Careful Scrutiny and Consideration as State Lawmakers Wrestle With Projected Budget Deficits*

**Austin, TX** – The President of the Texas Health Care Association (THCA), Tim Graves, today expressed concern about the growing cumulative pressure on the critical state and federal funding needed to preserve and protect Texas' most vulnerable nursing home residents. Specifically, Graves warned that sharp federal Medicare cuts already put in place by the Obama Administration in late 2009 – as well as those contained within the pending federal health care reform bill – must be a key consideration as state lawmakers begin assessing budgetary priorities in the face of looming state budget deficits.

“Governor Perry, Lt. Governor Dewhurst and Speaker Strauss have made it clear the challenging budget conditions we face going into the 2010-11 biennium will have a significant impact on determining budgetary priorities,” stated Graves. “We intend to highlight the fact that meeting seniors’ ongoing care needs – as well as sustaining a strong workforce and local jobs base – will be contingent upon sustaining appropriate Medicaid funding levels from Austin in the face of growing cuts to Medicare in Washington.”

In noting that Texas seniors’ Medicare-funded nursing home care was slashed by at least \$725 million over ten years on October 1, 2009 as a result of regulatory changes implemented by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Graves said the federal health care reform bill – if eventually signed into law by President Obama, includes additional deep Medicare cuts that “will have a significant, tangible, negative impact on local facility operations, quality improvement efforts, and the ongoing viability of facilities’ front line care workforce.”

Continued Graves: “It is essential to have a visible, engaged public discussion to help ensure our state lawmakers understand how and why federal Medicare spending is vital to propping-up Medicaid – and that keeping our state Medicaid program financially sound in the face of federal Medicare cuts is essential to protecting our most vulnerable.”

The THCA President said the Senate and House Interim Charges, specifically those surrounding Health and Human Services, provide an excellent template from which to move forward in terms of generating a necessary discussion in regard to how lawmakers can help continue meeting Texas seniors’ care needs in the face of budget threats. “A key priority throughout 2010 and 2011 must be to help preserve, protect and defend the economic viability of the facilities seniors depend upon throughout Texas,” 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.*