



## President's Comment

**Luis H. Urrea, II, M.D.**

*President*

*El Paso County Medical Society*



Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your president of the EPCMS which is celebrating its 110th anniversary. I encourage you to join me and become more involved in the future of medicine. My experiences in the EPCMS and TMA have taught me that participation in our medical societies is of utmost importance in order to advocate for our patients and our profession.

As a physician and a professional, we are OBLIGATED to be involved in the future of medicine. It is at the local level where TMA starts with the 200 county medical societies throughout the state. Tort reform in 2003 with the passage of Proposition 12 showed the power of a grassroots effort when physicians and patients come together.

2009 will be a very important legislative year for physicians. We must continue to be actively engaged.

President Obama has set a goal of healthcare reform within the year. The time is now for physicians to help mold the future of medicine. Medicine needs to be an active participant. Otherwise "if you do not get in this game then... you're on the menu".

We face numerous attacks on reversing tort reform and must support TMA to educate lawmakers in Austin on the great improvements that Proposition 12 has allowed. Our legislators must understand that the Business of Medicine is to get people Healthy. Frivolous lawsuits and defensive medicine do not make anyone healthier.

On a national level, a permanent solution to the flawed Medicare physician payment formula is overdue. HB6331 was not a true victory. It only temporarily averted the 10.6% payment cut and will guarantee a 21% reduction on physician fees in 2010 if nothing is changed. This will drastically decrease healthcare access especially on the Border. A medical economic index will allow practices to be viable businesses and increase access to healthcare.

With the Stimulus Bill, new challenges present with the further mandate of HIT and the logistics of converting practices while protecting the privacy of patients.

Specialty health centers led by physicians are a target for corporate medicine. Patient care is improved by allowing physicians to invest in technology, ancillary services and centers of excellence such as ambulatory surgical centers and specialty hospitals. Competition in healthcare, as in all other aspects of our economy, is healthy and

pushes all involved entities to provide better and more efficient patient care at a lower cost. Allowing a monopoly in healthcare is neither a solution nor an option.

In order to achieve these goals, medicine needs each individual physician to participate. Whether we like it or not, "If you are in the business of medicine, then you are in the business of politics." Politics is not a spectator sport. Spectators only watch and allow others to decide the fate of the game. The game of politics is to get your ideas into laws.

Numbers do make a great difference. Each one of us must participate at whatever level we can. At a minimum, membership and contribution to our local, state, and national societies is the baseline. We must do our part. It takes time, effort, and money to make change in Austin and Washington D.C.

We cannot afford NOT to invest in our future. Doctors need to learn how to play the game. Medicine must have a unified voice to make our case to the legislators. We must be persistent and put a human face on the issues of medicine. Lastly, we must help and support our friends to stay in office.

As the president of the AAOS, has pointed out "Advocacy is a marathon not a sprint." Physicians need to be patient and persistent.

My goals for the year will be: 1) to increase membership and participation at the county medical society level. 2) To increase support for TMA and its political action committee, TEXPAC 3) to promote further unity of our local medical organizations and become one greater voice for all physicians in El Paso 4) To build a stronger working relationship with the faculty and continue to help the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine.

Lastly, join us in Austin to take part in First Tuesdays at the Capitol to meet lawmakers and their staff to present medicine's case in person.

Please call me and our medical society with your comments, ideas and solutions to share with TMA and our lawmakers.

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**Luis H. Urrea, II, M.D.**  
President, El Paso County Medical Society