



## President's Comment

**Andres S. Enriquez, M.D.**

*President  
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TMA President Sue Bailey, MD, took office on Saturday, May 1, 2010, at a critical juncture in American Medicine. She pledged to lead TMA in a campaign to “take advantage of change” brought about by the new health reform law. This was the highlight of the TMA conference in Forth Worth for most people but for me it was a different one.

For me, it was watching Dr. Manuel Acosta with all his commitment and enthusiasm for medicine and wanting to make a difference. Dr. Acosta ran for Board of Trustees against five other doctors from all over the state, sadly to say he came up short, but he continued to maintain a good attitude and expressed to me “we have to continue the fight, in order to make a change.” We have very little representation in TMA, and when I say we I mean the border cities. Dr. Acosta has been that voice for us and I hope he continues to mentor and guide us with his experience and expertise.

The two day conference was filled with various meeting and agendas; I saw politics at its best. I was happy to see Doctors serving in the U.S. Congress and Texas Legislature – U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess, MD (R-Lewisville); State Sen. Bob Deuell, MD (R-Richmond).

The House of Delegates passed a resolution that states TMA continue to work with other medical organizations, with similar goals, and to advocate for patients and physicians on a national level. The house passed resolutions that support:

1. Changes to Medicare locality boundaries so payment reflects differences in local economic conditions;
2. Increased funding of mental illness and substance abuse treatment;
3. Higher pay for Medicaid physicians who treat patients after hours and on weekends;
4. Expansion in allopathic and osteopathic medical school enrollment;
5. Routine evidence-based cancer screening;
6. Restored funding of statewide preceptorship programs; and Vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV) of both young women and young men between the ages of 9 and 29.

These were just a few highlights of resolutions that the House passed.

Medicare, the foundation of the U.S. health system, is crumbling and needs permanent fix. In early April, Texas Medical Association launched a petition drive that urges Congress to fix the flawed

payment formula that now threatens the care for 2.5 million Medicare recipients.

I would like to thank the Doctors that recently attended the meeting with Congressman Sylvestre Reyes. Congressman Reyes has always been very open and forthright in what he tells us. I was going with the mind set to ask him for his public support on the SGR situation and how can we get a permanent solution. In the first five minutes of the meeting he presented a letter penned by several Congressmen including himself. The letter was sent to Majority Leader Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell for a permanent fix, the letter stated, “We write to you today because of the urgent need to permanently fix the physician payment formulas in these life-saving programs so that physicians can continue to deliver the highest quality care available.” It is time to keep a promise and permanently fix the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula as the House did in the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act of 2009 (H.R. 3961) on November 19, 2009. Congressman Reyes stated that the Senate now needs to take the same action and pass a similar reform. He seems to think the Health Reform will continue to evolve as time passes and different problems arise. It is our job to continue to fight for a fair reform and some type of permanent fix that will not only help us as a small business owner but will also benefit the patients and their health.

Lastly, the Border Health Caucus, led by Dr. Manny Acosta, held the 5<sup>th</sup> Border Health Conference in Washington, DC, June 22<sup>nd</sup> and June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The intent of the conference and lobbying trip was to discuss the dire health care situation along the U.S.-Mexico Border and to ask congress to take action. Our specific goals were to strengthen the border health infrastructure, prevent chronic disease, improve patient access by increasing the healthcare workforce, and improve Medicare.

The conference and lobbying trip is held annually and is a very proactive event. For more information on next year's trip, please contact the El Paso County Medical Society. We can always use more soldiers to carry the work and to participate. I would also like to thank the Texas Medical Association and Congressman Reyes and his staff for their affiliation and efforts in assuring that this conference is successful.

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