



President's Comment

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President

El Paso County Medical Society



Dear Colleagues:

As the 81st Texas legislative session progresses, a record number of bills have been introduced, many affecting the house of medicine. During TMA's First Tuesdays at the Capitol, almost 1,000 physicians have visited with lawmakers and their staff to present medicine's case in person. On April 6, seven of our El Paso colleagues traveled to Austin to participate in the grassroots lobbying efforts for you and your patients. I thank the following physicians for taking time from their practices and families to join Dr. Andres Enriquez, Patsy Slaughter, and me in Austin; Dr. Craig Cameron, Dr. David Palafox, Dr. Jose Luis Villarreal, Dr. Gilberto Handal, and Dr. Manuel Acosta. Please personally thank these individuals for their volunteerism and advocacy on behalf of medicine on our Border. Our busy schedule included meetings with Senators Shapleigh and Uresti, and Representatives Chavez, Quintanilla, Moody, Marquez, and Pickett.

Our lawmakers were very gracious with their time. The exchange of ideas and solutions was vital and educational for all in our collaborative effort to improve health care in El Paso and Texas.

These experiences are invaluable and help build a stronger relationship with our lawmakers. It reinforced in me the vital importance of open communications to allow us, as physicians, to give our state legislators the most accurate picture about how issues truly affect the practice of medicine. Our group focused on several important issues to El Paso. These include:

1. Protection of the 2003 medical liability reforms which have lived up to their promise.
2. Establishing an appropriate Medicaid payment system.
3. Ensuring due process for physicians with the Texas Medical Board.
4. Protecting the patient-physician relationship against any corporate practice of medicine and ensure physicians' independent medical judgment.
5. Expanding funding of Graduate Medical Education to increase residency slots.
6. Improving the Physician Education Loan Repayment Program to recruit physicians to underserved areas.

7. Allowing responsible ownership, whether by physicians or hospitals, of health care facilities and equipment.
8. Ensuring a single high standard of care for all Texans including our Border.

The highlight of the trip was being present with the family of Dr. Wm. Gordon McGee in the Chamber of the House of Representatives to hear the proclamation for his many years of service and leadership to our region. Many thanks go to Rep. Norma Chavez for championing this proclamation, as well as the other Representatives for being present at the reading.

I would like to invite you to join us in Washington D.C., June 22 - 24, 2009 for the Fourth Annual Border Health Conference hosted by Congressman Reyes to discuss healthcare deficiencies and problems on the Border and their solutions with our federal lawmakers.

As always, we need to join together and become one voice for medicine.

Luis H. Urrea, II, M.D.

President, El Paso County Medical Society



First Tuesdays at the Capitol April 2009

