

# President's Comment

**Jose Aun, M.D.**

*President*

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I would like to first congratulate Dr. C. Bruce Malone, MD for being inducted as the new TMA president and to Dr. Michael E. Speer, MD for becoming president-elect. The Texas legislature just wrapped its regular session. As I write this message, the legislature has been called into special session by Governor Perry to address the unsolved budget for the next biennium. The regular session was a tough for organized medicine but TMA and its excellent leadership and lobbyists fought the fight for medicine. There was numerous challenges including the proposed expansion of scope of practice by mid level practitioners that was successfully stopped by TMA efforts. The proposed ten percent cuts in Medicaid and CHIP provider rates was also reversed and are included in whatever budget that the legislature approves. Another important effort was Texas Medical Board Reform. Through TMA efforts, bills were passed in the legislature to address these. Four key elements passed were getting rid of anonymous complaints, increase the time for a physician to respond to a complaint notice from 30 to 45 days, allow physicians to tape the proceedings of a TMB informal settlement conference, and bind the TMB to the ruling of an administrative law judge in a proceeding supervised by the State Office of Administrative Hearings.

The ban on the corporate practice of medicine was protected in this legislative session with several controlled expansions for physician employment that included strong protections for clinical autonomy and independent medical judgment. The county hospital districts approved for this privilege with protections are Harris, Tarrant, Bexar, and El Paso. Bills were also passed that added first time extensions of protections for the thousands of physicians employed by hospital run nonprofit health care corporations, commonly referred as 501a corporations.

The biggest hit health care related items took likely was in medical education funding, particularly in graduate medical education. Despite TMA's efforts, there was significant cuts in funding especially in family practice residency programs. Lawmakers cut state GME formula funding by 31 percent, eliminated one of the two physician education loan repayment programs, and cut the other loan repayment program by 76 percent.

We will continue to monitor any changes that may occur in the special legislative session and will continue to work closely with the TMA to represent the best interest of the physician of the El Paso County Medical Society.

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**President, El Paso County Medical Society**

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