

## Rep. Chuck Hopson Joins Gov. Perry to Sign Landmark Medicaid Reform

FT. WORTH—Rep. Chuck Hopson joined U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt today, as Gov. Rick Perry signed SB 10 into law, reforming the state's Medicaid program which serves more than 2.7 million vulnerable, disabled and elderly Texans. The bill will also offer a premium assistance program to help uninsured working Texans, who are not



eligible for Medicaid, buy private insurance. "The health of our state economy depends on programs like Medicaid," said Rep. Hopson. "We need these programs to help our elderly and our disabled live their lives with honor and dignity. We need these reforms to make sure our healthcare system stays viable as our state grows."

Today, Texas' Medicaid program costs \$39.5 billion, accounting for 26 percent of the state's biennial budget. Hopson, who is a member of the Appropriations Committee that crafts the budget every two years, believes this bill will help institute a more flexible, innovative methodology to providing health care to underprivileged Texans, and will be able to serve individuals more efficiently.

Medicaid reform is designed to increase the percentage of Texans with health care coverage, focus on prevention and emphasize individual choice. Reform efforts will transform the state's health care infrastructure, optimize health investments, and begin providing health coverage to an estimated 200,000 uninsured Texans.

"Without these reforms we could be facing a health care crisis in the future," said Hopson. "These reforms will help prevent overcrowded emergency rooms, as well as, help local hospitals cover costs due to patients without health insurance and unable to pay their bills." Additionally, Medicaid reform will do the following: Provide assistance for enrollment in private insurance and employer-sponsored plans. Create tailored benefit packages for children with special health care needs. Promote consumer choice through health savings accounts and consumer directed services. Reward healthy lifestyle behaviors with health care incentives. Set a cost-sharing base for non-emergency use of emergency rooms. In addition to Medicaid reform, SB 10 also requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop a pilot project which provides incentives to primary care physicians serving Medicaid recipients who utilize health information technology, including electronic health records. Electronic medical records will ensure recipients are provided appropriate medical care. HHSC will immediately begin work to prepare and submit a Medicaid waiver request by this fall to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

SB 10 takes effect immediately. District 11 residents are encouraged to contact Rep. Hopson and his staff in his capitol office at 512-463-0592, or district office at 866-233-5100.

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## Brown County Grand Jury Indicts Texas Youth Commission Officer, Inmate for Drug Possession

BROWNWOOD – A Texas Youth Commission officer and an inmate were indicted Thursday for possessing drugs at the Ron Jackson Juvenile Correctional Facility. Juvenile correctional officer Henry Ruben Firth, Jr., 29, and inmate Daniel Ochoa, Jr., 20, each face one count of possessing a prohibited substance in a correctional facility, a third-degree felony punishable by two to 10 years in prison.

Law enforcement officers with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) arrested Ochoa at the facility and transported him to the Brown County Jail, where bond was set at \$10,000. OAG officers arrested Firth in Bedford. He was transferred to Tarrant County Jail, where he is being held in lieu of \$15,000 bond. Both defendants will be prosecuted by the Brown County District Attorney's Office. With these indictments, Texans can rest assured that state and local officials are aggressively pursuing allegations of wrongdoing at Texas Youth Commission facilities across the state," Attorney General Abbott said. "We are grateful to Brown County District Attorney Michael Brandon Murray, TYC

grand jury for their diligent attention to this matter. Together, we will ensure that order and justice will pervade at these facilities." In March, Texas The OAG's Special Investigations Unit continues to work with other law enforcement agencies to monitor allegations of wrongdoing at Texas Youth Commission facilities. The OAG's participation in the joint effort stems from a March 2007 executive order, which provided for a collaborative effort with the Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice to provide assistance and support. This case was investigated by the OAG as part of that ongoing effort Youth Commission staff discovered marijuana in Ochoa's possession. According to the indictment, First provided the illegal substance to the youth.



## East Texas Rural Electric hosts Youth Seminar

Jacksonville, TX. - Nine East Texas Rural Electric Cooperatives join together each summer to sponsor a Youth Seminar. This years Youth Seminar will be held June 25 - 28, 2007 at Lon Morris College. The purpose of the seminar is to give youth an opportunity to learn leadership and problem-solving skills while providing an understanding of rural, consumer-owned electric systems. It will consist of workshops, group sessions and several social events. Youth will have the opportunity to meet outstanding speakers all over the United States and have the opportunity to compete for at least one of thirteen scholarships. One hundred twenty-five East Texas youth are expected to attend. Parents are invited to attend the Wednesday evening Talent Show. Three Rusk youth are among others attending. They are Courtney Foreman, Sheena Henderson and Jasmine Harris. Sponsoring Cooperatives are Bowie-Cass, Cherokee County, Deep East Texas, Houston County, Jasper-Newton, Panola-Harrison, Rusk County, Upshur-Rural, and Wood County. Sam Hammontree is Camp director.

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