Legislative Update

Well folks, for better or worse, today is Sine Die. The last day of a legislative session that has been replete with open and oftentimes abrasive disagreements between the two chambers. While every session we like to think, "Geez, they've all been bad...but THIS one has been worse than any of them!"

But really though....it has. Many insiders have noted this session was unlike its predecessors and ended up the way it did because unlike in year's past this session didn't have a referee step in between the two chambers and make them get along - i.e. the Governor has been shockingly absent throughout this session and has let the chambers duke it out, to minimal success.

As of Thursday last week, the 133rd day, the chambers had sent over 50% fewer bills to the Governor as of the same day of the last session. That's not quite as bad of a passage rate as Congress....but it's close.

That said, we've got a budget (as bad as it may be) and we've got a Board of Nursing sunset bill with amendments favorable to nurses, so things didn't turn out too bad. Speaking of nursing, let's take a very quick look at some bills that did pass.
Updates on bills that affect nursing:

HB 2950
The Board of Nursing sunset bill ended up in a conference committee after Rep. Burkett refused to concur in the Senate amendments, but the differences were quickly worked out and the bill passed out on Saturday before the midnight deadline. It has been sent to the Governor for signature.

HB 1225/SB 654
The bills that allow APRNs to stay in-network even if their delegating physician fall out have been modified to only apply to Medicaid & CHIP but has been sent to the Governor for signature!

SB 2118 by Seliger is the community college bachelor’s degree bill, and it was passed by the House to be sent to the Governor late last week. We should expect this to take affect soon and allow community colleges to start developing their BSN programs shortly!

SB 196 by Garcia is the notification bill to require schools to notify parents if there’s not a school counselor, nurse or librarian on campus full time. This bill was amended in the House to only apply to non-rural school districts, which is apparently only around 8.9% of all school districts in Texas. So it was watered down significantly, but passed and was sent to the Governor.

HB 280 by Howard which sets up grants for facilities to combat workplace violence passed and was sent to the Governor.

HB 62 by Craddick which is the statewide texting and driving ban was finally passed after more than a decade of attempts. However, the Governor has been quoted recently as not being sure whether or not he’ll sign it...so we’ll see if this bill actually becomes law.

HB 3296 by Klick which reduces the number of nurses employed from 10 to 8 for required peer review passed and was sent to the Governor.

Make sure to attend TNA's Leadership Conference at the end of September to get a full legislative recap!

Rulemaking Update - May 30, 2017

ADOPTED:
Texas Health and Human Services - HHSC has adopted new STAR+PLUS rules to transition the Nursing Facility Minimum Payment Amounts Program from enhanced payment rates to a Quality Incentive Payment Program (QIPP). The amendment allows a final eligibility period for existing participants prior to the shift to QIPP.

IN ADDITION:
Department of State Health Services - DSHS has provided notice for an amendment to the controlled substances schedules, moving new drugs into Schedule I.