Merry Christmas and happy holidays to you all!

December marks the end of the NLAC 2019-2020 membership term. What an incredibly long, strange trip it’s been! Of course, the hope is that our partnership continues in 2021-2022 and expands to include even more members. In 2020, due to COVID-19, nurses have had increased visibility and attention in the public eye. Unnecessary constraints on the profession were lifted as serious problems in the state’s health care and disaster response were exposed. The goodwill the public has
for nurses means the 87th Texas Legislature could be successful for nursing overall. Together we are stronger!

Regardless of NLAC membership, the more Texas nurses that know the 2021 Nursing Legislative Agenda, the better chance nursing's bills have of being passed. The 2021 Nursing Legislative Agenda includes issues that affect the profession from classroom to public schools to bedside to the OR and beyond. To that end, NLAC will host a virtual Legislative Workshop at 10 a.m. CST Saturday, Jan. 23, 2021. The workshop is open to all; Free for nurses that are members of NLAC organizations and $10.00 for non-NLAC members. Registration opens Jan. 4, 2021.

Now is the time for professional nursing organizations in Texas to come together and work with the Texas Legislature to improve and protect the nursing profession and health care for all Texans. Enrollment for 2021-2022 NLAC membership is open and invoices have been sent to current NLAC representatives. Any organization interested in joining NLAC or learning more is encouraged to contact Catherine White (cwhite@texasnurses.org). The upcoming legislative session is ripe with opportunity and the voice of frontline health care workers should be important to state lawmakers.

**Follow us on Twitter at @TXNursesLege, the twitter handle for Nursewatch.

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Capitol Brief Update
by Kevin C. Stewart, II

Bill prefiling for the 87th Texas Legislature has begun! Over 500 bills were filed on the first day of prefiling but that pace did not hold for very long. After the initial flurry of legislation, filing slowed dramatically heading into Thanksgiving. Filing should pick back up as we approach the start of session.

Among the bills that have already been filed, we've seen some great pieces of legislation for nurses, including some on the NLAC agenda. For example, HB 326 by Representative Howard, is the workplace violence prevention bill. Last session, this bill made it through committee but died due to deadlines.

HB 396, by Representative Moody, addresses nurses that treat COVID patients and
contract COVID. It would create a legal presumption for workers’ compensation that COVID was contracted in the course of the nurse’s employment.

Also related to disaster response, HB 515 and HB 522, by Representatives Oliverson and Johnson, respectively, would ensure that providers are reimbursed equally regardless of whether a service was provided in-person or through telehealth. Given the massive expansion of telemedicine and telehealth through the pandemic, this legislation is critical to ensuring that providers are treated fairly moving forward.

Last but, certainly, not least, SB 146 by Senator Powell would create a loan repayment program for nurses working in long-term care facilities. This bill was also filed last session, and it made it through committee in both chambers.

All in all, I would say nursing has had a great first few weeks on the bill filing front. Please stay tuned for more updates on these and other bills as they work their way through the legislature.

Bookmark Texas Tribune to get the latest political news!

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Texas Register: Rules and Regulations

Texas Board of Nursing

Nov. 27, 2020

22 TAC 217.23, Balance Billing Notice and Disclosure Requirements (PROPOSED)

The BON has proposed balanced billing rules to implement SB 1264 (86th). The rule language is nearly identical to rules promulgated from the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI), specifically Rules 28 TAC §§21.4901 - 21.4904. In addition to restating the TDI rules, the BON clarifies that it has the authority to discipline licensees based on the new rule, which is authority granted to them in Insurance Code §752.0003.

Remember …
You can find the Texas Register on the Texas Secretary of State website, where ALL the rule proposals and adoptions from the Texas BON and other state regulatory
agencies are updated weekly on Fridays and published. Nursewatch will print some of the more pertinent updates to nursing rules and regulations but you can delve deeper into current and past issues of the Texas Register at your leisure on the S.O.S. website.

Upcoming Events

- **Texas Tribune: A Preview of the 2021 Legislative Session**, noon-1 p.m. CST Dec. 7-11. Daily lunch discussions on how state lawmakers plan to address everything from redistricting to budget shortfalls, all against the backdrop of the ongoing economic and public health crises being faced by millions across Texas. Registration [here](#).

- **Texas HHSC Behavioral Health Conference**, Dec. 9, virtual. Free conference focusing on key behavioral health initiatives, innovations, obstacles and opportunities. Registration is limited, first come first serve. Questions: email alltexasaccess@hhsc.state.tx.us.


- **2021 Nurse Day at the Capitol - Virtual**, 1-4:30 p.m. CST Feb. 8, 2021, via Zoom. Virtual event where Texas nurses convene to learn about Texas’ current health landscape and how nurses can influence policy for Texans. The agenda includes public health updates from state health leaders and legislators, and opportunities for advocacy training as well as a chance to speak with legislators from their area. Register [here](#).

If your NLAC organization/association is having an open event or you know of a relevant activity/event, please send the information to TNA Government Affairs Coordinator Catherine White for inclusion in upcoming issues of Nursewatch.

Contribute to the Texas Nurse PAC today! There has never been a more important time to support nursing's efforts to engage and inform Texas legislators on issues and concerns of the profession. Pledge $20 in 2020, the Year of the Nurse. [Invest](#).
in your profession. **Invest** in your peers. **Invest in the Texas Nurse PAC today!**

*Donations to Texas NURSE PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.*

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