Happy New Year, NLAC! In addition to kicking off a new NLAC membership term, 2021 begins with the convening of the Texas Legislature Tuesday, Jan. 12 and the opportunity for Texas nurses to help enact big change in the state's health care system at a time when the profession's expertise is needed most.
We request that all NLAC representatives share three things with their membership:

- The [2021 Nursing Legislative Agenda](#)
- NLAC’s virtual Legislative Workshop at 10 a.m. CST Saturday, Jan. 23, 2021. Free for nurse members of NLAC organizations and $10.00 for non-members. **Note:** Representatives of NLAC organizations have been provided with a promo code that they may share with their members. [Contact Cathy White](#) for more information.
- Virtual Nurse Day at the Capitol February 8

NLAC will work with a Texas Legislature focusing more heavily on the state’s health care system due to the devastating toll COVID-19 has had on the Lone Star state. In 2020, the pandemic increased nursing’s visibility and influence in the public eye, and unnecessary constraints on the profession were lifted as the health crisis exposed serious issues with the state’s health care and disaster response. The continuing goodwill the public has for nurses means the 87th Texas Legislature could be successful for nursing overall and provide the profession with a unique opportunity to pass important legislation. If ever there was a time for Texas nursing organizations to pool resources and champion a legislative agenda that improves and protects the profession and Texas patients, it is NOW!

NLAC will hold its first legislative update on January 22. 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. Any organization interested in joining NLAC or learning more is encouraged to contact Cathy White ([cwhite@texasnurses.org](mailto:cwhite@texasnurses.org)). The 2021 legislative session could be very successful for Texas nurses as the voice of frontline health care workers holds high importance to state lawmakers due to the pandemic. Join us and help NLAC make a difference at a time that it really matters!

**Follow us on Twitter at [TXNursesLege](https://twitter.com/TXNursesLege), the twitter handle for Nursewatch.**
Capitol Brief Update

by Kevin C. Stewart, II

The legislative session officially begins next week! It will be a unique session with limited access to the hearing rooms and legislative offices but it will, nevertheless, be an important session for healthcare, generally, and nurses, specifically. The legislature will have an opportunity to take the lessons learned during the pandemic and turn them into state law. In the last edition of NurseWatch, I wrote about some key bills that will directly impact nursing practice if passed. I’m happy to report that, since the last update, there have been even more great bills filed!

On the last update, I mentioned HB 515 and HB 522, which would ensure that providers are reimbursed for telemedicine and telehealth services just as they would be for in-person services. In the past few weeks, two identical companion bills were filed — HB 980 by Representative Fierro and SB 228 by Senator Blanco. We will watch these closely and, of course, support these legislators as the bills move through the process.

Also on the telehealth front, Rep. Four Price filed a large telehealth expansion bill that would apply to Medicaid and other state health programs. The bill would instruct the Health and Human Services Commission to expand its telehealth and telemedicine offerings and specifically directs the agency to reimburse for home telemonitoring and audio-only behavioral health services. This is a fantastic bill that we are excited to support.

Representative Howard filed HB 982, which would create an expedited licensure process for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses who hold a license in good standing from another state. This is an important bill that will help the state increase the number of providers we have, as well as make life easier for APRNs who want to practice in Texas.

Needless to say, nurses already have a lot to be excited about this legislative session. We’re expecting more nursing bills to be filed in the coming weeks. Even with pandemic restrictions in place, there will undoubtedly be numerous opportunities for nurses to participate in the legislative process this session. We will keep you in the loop as those opportunities arise, so please stay tuned!
Texas Register: Rules and Regulations

There were no pertinent nursing rules or regulations in December

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

- **NLAC Virtual Legislative Workshop**, 10 a.m. CST Jan. 23, 2021, via Zoom. Virtual event to share the 2021 Nursing Legislative Agenda with Texas nurses and nursing students. Registration is free for Texas nurses that belong to an NLAC organization (promo code required); $10.00 for all others. Register here.

- **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 throughout February. 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. 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.