

## Nurse Advocacy: If not YOU, then who?

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As an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Concordia University of Texas's College of Nursing, I taught the Foundations course and spent time examining the four roles of Nursing as defined in the Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) of Graduates of Texas Nursing Programs under the Texas Board of Nursing.

One of those roles is Member of the Profession. As a Member of the Profession, each nurse has a responsibility to the profession. The DEC says that "nurses must assume responsibility and accountability for the quality of nursing care provided to patients, families, populations, and communities." It states that one of the ways nurses accomplish this is through the legislative advocacy process. Change will occur and each nurse, as a Member of the Profession, has a responsibility to be a part of that process and move the profession forward.

How can you be a responsible Member of the Profession?

Get involved in your professional organization. Organizations such as the Texas Nurses Association (TNA) work to maintain control and/or oversight of the profession, represent the interests of the nurse and protect the public interest. By being a member of a professional organization, nurses can take the first step in being an advocate for their profession.

[State Representative Donna Howard](#) (District 48 – Austin), a nurse who was elected to the state legislature in 2006, says, "I encourage nurses to visit their elected representatives for several reasons: as experts regarding the nursing profession, as advocates for quality healthcare delivery, and to ensure their representatives know them and identify them as a go-to source for information regarding legislation."

Nurses must be personally involved and engaged in their profession.

The [Nursing Legislative Agenda Coalition](#) (NLAC) is another influential group that advocates for legislation needed to advance nursing practice in Texas.

[State Representative John Cyrier](#) (District 17 – Bastrop) says, "As with all advocates, I feel that professionals from these different fields bring a unique perspective and are often a great resource on the subject." He added, "Successful advocacy can bring about change in health care."

The 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature begins January 8, 2019 where there will be many opportunities to engage in advocacy for legislation that impacts nursing.

Rep. Howard says, "You never know what your own future holds - today's nurse advocates may be tomorrow's policymakers!"

▶ Read the full article in the Summer issue of *Texas Nursing* magazine.

*James R. Hilliard MSN, BSN, RN, is currently a member of TNA's Government Affairs Committee Capitol Corps and believes that the nurse's role as advocate for their profession is essential.*



James R. Hilliard at the Texas Capitol during the 2017 Legislative Session.

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