By: Watson, Nelson S.C.R. No. 28

1 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, In 2000, more than two million senior citizens lived in Texas, and it is estimated that by 2020 the number of Texans over the age of 65 will increase to approximately 3.4 million; and

WHEREAS, With average life expectancy continuing to rise, the considerable costs associated with caring for the elderly are a major concern for policy makers nationwide; the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid estimates that in 2004 Texans spent \$5.590 billion for nursing home care and \$3.626 billion for home health care, more than one-third of which was paid for using public funds; and

WHEREAS, Further complicating the issue of elder care is the fact that seniors are increasingly choosing to live in their own homes for as long as possible; this trend toward "aging in place" requires significant changes in the methods of delivery in health care, social services, and support systems for the elderly; and

WHEREAS, Addressing the challenges that "aging in place" presents for monitoring the health and welfare of the elderly has prompted practitioners and policy makers to consider alternative solutions that may be provided by advances in technology, especially in delivering services to seniors who live in rural areas and are often required to drive substantial distances to visit medical providers; and

24 WHEREAS, Advances in telecommunications, such as

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high-quality imaging and interactive real-time video, have significantly improved access to advanced health care; these only telemedicine/telehealth services not are efficacious but also cost-effective if impediments to the expanded use of these technologies in current Medicare regulations are removed; and

WHEREAS, Requirements under the Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000 severely limit Medicare reimbursement of telemedicine/telehealth services, prohibiting the use of certain telecommunications techniques and restricting payments to hub-site providers; expanding the types of telemedicine/telehealth technologies that are eligible for reimbursement under the Medicare program would reduce the need for expensive inpatient chronic care and foster the development of improved telemedicine/telehealth capabilities in skilled nursing facilities, lessening the burden and expense of transporting sick and frail elderly patients to and from various health care providers; and

WHEREAS, Federal legislation to revise telemedicine/telehealth reimbursement requirements under Medicare was filed as recently as 2005 during the 109th Congress, and with the expected increase in the senior citizen population in Texas, it is appropriate that the Texas congressional delegation support current efforts to expand Medicare-covered telemedicine/telehealth services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the Texas congressional delegation to

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support federal legislation requiring the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services to take substantive and affirmative actions to expand telemedicine/telehealth services, especially the initiation of Medicare reimbursement for telemedicine/telehealth home health services in home health care and in skilled nursing facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, and all members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.