

By: Watson, Nelson

S.C.R. No. 28

1 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, Advances in telecommunications, such as

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

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

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

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

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

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