

By: Watson

S.C.R. No. 28

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

4 WHEREAS, With average life expectancy continuing to rise, the  
5 considerable costs associated with caring for the elderly are a  
6 major concern for policy makers nationwide; the Centers for  
7 Medicare and Medicaid estimates that in 2005 Texans spent \$121.9  
8 billion for nursing home care and \$47.5 billion for home health  
9 care, more than 50 percent of which was paid for using public funds;  
10 and

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

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

23 WHEREAS, Advances in telecommunications, such as  
24 high-quality imaging and interactive real-time video, have

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

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

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

25 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas  
26 hereby respectfully urge the Texas congressional delegation to  
27 support federal legislation requiring the Centers for Medicaid and

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

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