



NLAC Update: JULY 2021

NLAC 2022 meetings scheduled; Still time to join & amplify nursing's voice!

While the 87th Texas Legislative session may be over, the interim is a very busy time for grassroots advocacy work, and development of issues to be included in the Nursing Legislative Agenda for the 88th Texas Legislature in 2023.

NLAC representatives have chosen meeting dates in Spring and Fall 2022 and should have received invitations to those meetings.

In the meantime, although it doesn't appear health care will be on Gov. Abbott's special session agenda, it is ALWAYS a good time to engage state lawmakers and educate them of the pressing concerns in nursing practice and the ways in which they can support nurses.

This month's Nursewatch features Texas Nurses Association member and district government affairs liaison Tracey Ramsey Abbott, who shares her experience engaging with Texas legislators.

It's not too late for nursing organizations to join NLAC and strengthen the influence of the profession at the state capitol! Learn more about the coalition and how to join on TNA's [NLAC](#) page. You can get details by emailing governmentalaffairs@texasnurses.org.



Grassroots Advocacy DOES Make a Difference!



In the first 48 years of my life, it never occurred to me to let my elected officials know of concerns that arose in my community. Once becoming involved in the Texas Nurses Association, I was introduced to the concept of forming relationships with my representatives. One of the stories about speaking with lawmakers is close to home.

My mother told me about how the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) was changing her health insurance provider last year. She, and the rest of the Houston area ERS receivers, were being forced to switch their health providers that they had established relationships with for years, sometimes decades, because they no longer accepted their insurance. Some of these retirees had multiple comorbidities. I was horrified! I wanted to do something to help my mom and her friends. I decided to write to the legislators and tell them the human toll their decision made. I looked up my mom's elected officials on <https://whoaremyrepresentatives.org>. This website provides all your elected officials from federal to local and their contact information.

I wrote a letter to my mother's lawmakers with personal narratives directly from my mom and her affected friends about how this change would impact their lives. To my amazement, I received replies that were not just form letters! I received a letter from Governor Abbott's office stating that the office of the ERS Executive Director would be getting in touch with my mom to see how they could help. That is exactly what happened. The ERS ED called my mother and explained to her the mandate associated with the change and how ERS is obligated to the stakeholders (ERS benefit recipients) to utilize the funds as prudently as possible. Then the ED stated that he would be happy to help my mother, and any other beneficiaries to navigate getting new providers. The fact that they took the time to help my mom and her friends was a big step in feeling our concerns were heard. We felt seen.

The whole process was easy as could be and can be summed up as:

1. Identify an issue you would like your representative to address.
2. Write a letter to the representative/s stating the issue and what you would like the resolution to be.
3. Allow about three business days for a response.
4. If you do not receive a response or only a form letter, call the representative's office stating that you are a constituent and would like help with an issue. Restate what was in your email.
5. Persistence is key. However, in my scenario, I received a timely response without having to call the office.

Since diving in with the ERS issue, I have become more involved in forming relationships with my representatives. It is a rewarding experience and has taken away the notion I had that legislators are untouchable leaders on top of a hill. They are extremely approachable, enjoy hearing from their constituents, and love having experts in fields they are unfamiliar with.

- **Tracey Ramsey Abbott, DNP, MPAff, RN, CAIP, CNAMB**
TNA District 5 Director of Government Affairs

To learn more about advocating with your lawmaker, check out our [Advocacy Toolkit!](#)

Join NLAC and help nurses make a difference where it matters!



*** Follow us on Twitter at [@TXNursesLege](#), the twitter handle for Nursewatch.*

Capitol Brief Update

by Kevin C. Stewart, II

The 87th Legislative Session is officially over and it was a difficult session all around, given the pandemic, an extremely tight budget and the fallout from the winter storm. But there were some bright spots!

On the telemedicine/telehealth front, the legislature passed [HB 4](#), which took effect immediately when Gov. Abbott signed it on June 15. The bill instructs HHSC to reimburse for more telemedicine and telehealth services generally, and specifically instructs the agency to allow home telemonitoring and audio-only behavioral health. [SB 437](#) was signed into law on June 16, effective immediately, and requires the Department of State Health Services to create a reserve of PPE for healthcare workers. Finally, [HB 133](#), signed June 15 and effective Sept. 1, extends Medicaid coverage to women for 12 months after delivery or miscarriage.

While many nursing-specific bills didn't get passed, almost every bill on the NLAC agenda made it farther along in the process than they've ever been! The workplace violence bill ([HB 326](#)) made it all the way through the House, as did the Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program flexibility bill ([HB 546](#)).

While the full practice authority bill ([HB 2029](#)) did not get through, the APRN death certificate bill ([HB 4048](#)) made it through both chambers and was signed by the governor on June 15. It became effective immediately. Finally, the school-nurse asthma bill ([HB 3819](#)) made it all the way through the House, and then the Senate committee, but the clock ran out before it could be heard on the Senate floor. All told, I'm very happy with the progress nursing made this session, despite very few actual bills passing.

As you know, following the end of session, fingers started pointing over what went wrong for so many bills. Gov. Abbott had publicly called out the legislature for not passing the omnibus election and bail reform bills. He retaliated with a line-item veto of Article 10 of the budget, which funds the legislature and its employees. Some Texas House Democrats and legislative staff have responded by filing a petition with the Texas Supreme Court to override Gov. Abbott's recent veto.

We'll certainly keep everyone in the loop as things progress, especially since the governor has called a special session for July 8.

I appreciate those of you who have taken the time to engage in the process despite all that's been going on the past six months.

For more of my session wrap-up, check out my [final legislative update podcast](#) with TNA Government Affairs Committee member Sola Oyewuwo MSN, MBA, RN.



Bookmark [Texas Tribune](#) to get the latest political news!

Texas Register: Rules and Regulations

Texas Board of Nursing

[June 11, 2021](#)

221.14 Nurse-Midwives Providing Controlled Substances (PROPOSED) As part of its formal rule review process, the BON identified a rule that had not been properly updated after the passage of SB 406. This proposal clarifies that a physician may delegate to seven nurse midwives and physician assistants or their full-time equivalents and adds prescriptive authority agreements to the list of ways in which a physician may delegate to a nurse midwife.

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

- **Happy 4th of July!** Enjoy a safe and happy holiday celebrating America's Independence!
- **Texas DSHS Grand Round Series:**
Perinatal Mood Disorders: Diagnosis Treatment & Referral, live webinar; 11 a.m. CST July 7. CE credits/contact hours for multiple disciplines awarded for attendance. Learn more and register [here](#).
- **[TNP's Rural Telehealth Virtual Conference](#)**, July 17, 2021. TNP's first rural health conference will cover best practices, augmented assessment, innovation, vendor platforms and more. Registration deadline July 15.
- **[The Texas Tribune Festival](#)**, Sept. 20-25, 2021. Multi-day celebration of big, bold ideas about politics, public policy and the day's news, headlined by names you already know alongside those you should. Includes panel discussions, interviews and programming curated by The Texas Tribune journalists. TribFest 2021 will offer a hybrid experience of virtual and live events. Learn more [here](#).
- **[TNSA 2021 Convention](#)**, Oct. 14-16, 2021, Austin, TX. Register [here](#).



- [2021 Panhandle Great 25 Nurses](#), Nov. 4, 2021, Amarillo, TX. Recognize and honor nurses for their contributions to the individual patient, families and communities in which they live and work and across the Texas Panhandle.

*If your NLAC organization/association is having an open event or you know of a relevant activity/event, please send the details to TNA Government Affairs Coordinator [Catherine White](#) for inclusion in upcoming issues of **Nursewatch**.*



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!](#)

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