



January 2019

## *Legislative Session Begins*

The 86th Texas Legislature convened Jan. 8 and will end on May 27. Although the only requirement is that lawmakers adopt a balanced budget for the 2020-21 biennium, a myriad of issues will be introduced, although the expected focus will be on public education funding and limits on property tax increases.

The November General Election made some changes to the composition of both chambers, and perhaps will lead to more bipartisanship and cooperation than in the last few sessions. House Republicans went from a 95 to 55 majority in 2017 to the current 83 to 65 margin, with two vacancies to be filled in upcoming special elections in two Democratic districts. On the Senate side, Republicans lost one seat for a 19 to 12 majority this session.

As anticipated **Rep. Dennis Bonnen (R-Angleton)** unanimously was elected Speaker of the House. He – along with Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick – have agreed that public education funding is the top priority for the session, and the Senate also has prioritized tax relief by establishing a cap on local property tax increases.

**Comptroller Glenn Hegar** has announced that legislators will have up to \$119.1 billion in revenue available for general-purpose spending for the 2020-21 state budget, an 8.1 percent increase from the current two-year budget. Hegar cautioned legislators that the state's booming economy which fueled the revenue growth is likely to decline, noting that oil prices have dropped

significantly since October. He also pointed out that the top priorities of education spending and property tax cuts also are “costly budget drivers.”

Another major budget driver is **healthcare**. This year’s debate will include funding for Hurricane Harvey recovery and future preparedness efforts and school safety. Additionally, maternal and infant mortality issues – and funding for programs that can prevent these deaths – will be priorities for TETAF.

Bill filing began in mid-November. Already four bills to repeal the Driver Responsibility Program have been filed in the House, and Sen. Kirk Watson has filed S.B. 274 to reduce surcharges.

On Jan. 11, TETAF staff will meet again with a legislative group including representatives from the Lieutenant Governor’s office, the Speaker’s office and staff of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees to continue **trauma funding discussions**. TETAF is heavily involved in helping these leadership groups find funding alternatives to the Driver Responsibility Program and additional funding for EMS and RACs.

In the next few weeks, House and Senate leaders will appoint committee chairs and make committee assignments. Then committee hearings can begin. TETAF is finalizing tools and messages to assist hospital/EMS/ambulance/RAC advocates in communicating with legislators during the session. These materials will be shared as they become available.

### **Legislative Workgroup Calls**

TETAF’s weekly Legislative Workgroup calls begin Friday, Jan. 11. While calls normally will be at 10 a.m., this week’s call is at 3:30 p.m. To join the Legislative Workgroup, send an email to [info@tetaf.org](mailto:info@tetaf.org).

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## **TETAF Legislative Priorities Focus on Funding, RACs**

TETAF’s priority for the 2019 session is increasing and preserving state funding for the trauma system, which has been stagnant or even declined in some

cases despite record population growth and corresponding increases in demands for services. A more adequate, stable funding stream is needed to support Emergency Medical Services, Regional Advisory Councils, designated trauma hospitals and the Emergency Medical Task Force. To accomplish this over-arching objective, TETAF will focus on several initiatives, including:

**Support efforts to find replacement funds for the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP)** – The majority of state funding for the trauma and emergency healthcare system currently is generated through the Driver Responsibility Program. Attempts to repeal the program already are underway, and TETAF has been working on alternative sources of adequate, stable, sustainable funding, should these efforts be successful in 2019.

**Strengthen RAC language in statute and provide sufficient funding** – RACs' roles have expanded greatly to include regional emergency preparedness, cardiac, stroke, perinatal and injury prevention work. At the same time, state funding has decreased and the main revenue source, the Permanent Tobacco Fund for EMS and Trauma Care (Fund 5046) was depleted. Restoring the depleted corpus and updating the role of RACs in statute to accurately reflect the responsibilities expected of them by the state are needed.

**Revitalize Emergency Response System Post-Hurricane Harvey** –Through the RACs, the Emergency Medical Task Force (EMTF) provides a well-coordinated response during large scale incidents, like hurricanes, by offering rapid professional medical assistance to emergency operation systems. When appropriating Hurricane Harvey funds, the state must replenish depleted resources and ensure that aging infrastructure is replaced so Texas will continue to stand ready for the next emergency.

**Fund RAC training for bystanders in bleeding control** – Funding is needed to continue the 22 RACs' regional efforts to train bystanders in bleeding control through the Stop the Bleed initiative and to place Stop the Bleed kits in publicly accessible locations alongside AED machines.

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## Trauma and Emergency Health Care

# Day at the Capitol Set for Feb. 26

TETAF will host its biennial **Trauma and Emergency Health Care Day at the Capitol** on **Feb. 26**. The briefing location is being finalized. Registration and continental breakfast begin at 8:30 a.m.

Following a 9 a.m. briefing and review of the day's activities and key messages, attendees will be recognized on the floor of the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate, and attendees should sit in the respective galleries and stand when recognized.

After lunch on your own, attendees should deliver TETAF's key messages on priority legislation to their respective members. TETAF is working with legislators to offer alternative revenue streams to support the trauma system should the Driver Responsibility Program be repealed. TETAF also is advocating for adequate funding for Trauma Regional Advisory Councils.

While there is no charge to participate in Trauma and Emergency Health Care Day at the Capitol, registration is required and will open soon.

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## **New Board Members Elected, Revisions to Bylaws Approved**

During the Dec. 13 TETAF General Assembly meeting in San Antonio, five board members were elected and bylaws changes were approved.

**Scott Christopher, Dr. Nilda Garcia, Kathy Perkins** and **Danny Updike** all were re-elected to the TETAF Board. They each previously had drawn one-year terms and opted to be re-nominated to serve a full three-year term. **Angela Gentry** was elected to her first three-year term on the TETAF Board.

Christopher, a flight RN with PHI Air Medical based in Lufkin, has been a TETAF Board member since 2009, has been the Deep East Texas RAC chairman for 16 years and is a past president of the Texas Trauma Coordinators' Forum and former GETAC Trauma Systems subcommittee member.

Garcia, a trauma and acute-care pediatric surgeon at Dell Children's Hospital in Austin, is a TETAF-approved Trauma Level III and IV and NICU Level IV physician site surveyor. In addition to her hospital duties, Garcia is an instructor for ATLS and ATOM courses. She is a member of Capital Area RAC O.

Perkins, a former Army nurse, is retired from state government where she led large organizational units and worked with stakeholder and Advisory Committee assistance to develop and implement the first rules, policies, procedures and documents for the EMS/Trauma System.

Urdike has been Executive Director of the Concho Valley Regional Advisory Council TSA-K for more than 10 years as well as in the same position for Texas J Regional Advisory Council TSA-J. He is a former nurse and EMT and former GETAC Air Medical Task Force/Air Medical Committee member.

Gentry, nurse manager of the trauma program at Baylor Scott & White Medical Center in Temple, is the vice chair of Central Texas TSA-L, chair of the Health Care Coalition and chair of the EMTF Region 7 Governance Committee. She serves on the GETAC Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Committee. Gentry also was appointed to the National Emergency Nurses Association Emergency Management and Preparedness Committee and serves as the 2018 chairperson. Gentry is filling the board position previously occupied by Jorie Klein of Parkland Health & Hospital System in Dallas.

Klein was one of the founders of TETAF and led the original board for many years. Her decades of dedicated service and commitment to TETAF are deeply appreciated.

Members of TETAF's General Assembly approved changes to the organization's bylaws. The main change was to rewrite the purposes of the organization. The original purposes adopted in 2006 are no longer relevant as the organization has matured. The new purposes address TETAF's roles in supporting the development of regional health care delivery, promoting regional collaboration, advocating for sound public policy and adequate funding, raising awareness and educating various audiences about the value of regional health care delivery systems and serving as a resource for consultation and

verification surveys of organizations seeking specialty designation or recognition. TETAF also provides targeted education and consultative services for regional health care delivery systems and their stakeholders, and operates as a nonprofit entity.

Language regarding at-large General Assembly members was clarified to ensure staggered terms, and establish term limits consistent with TETAF Board member positions. Clarification was made requiring written voting proxies, use of an email voting process and modification of requirements to elect directors based on top vote recipients rather than a majority. Throughout the document, references to a TETAF Council were replaced with TETAF “Committee.”

The revised bylaws will be available on the TETAF website.

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## **TETAF Hosts RAC Development Workshop**

Leaders from 19 of the 22 Trauma Regional Advisory Councils met in a development workshop Dec. 13 and 14 in conjunction with the TETAF General Assembly and TETAF Board meetings.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is reviewing current RAC rules. During the workshop, RACs discussed their concerns with potential RAC contract changes that would require RAC bylaws to include state RAC contract language and requirements.

In addition, RAC leaders shared ideas and best practices related to RAC board composition, including involvement of community members and representation of all stakeholders in the Trauma Service Area. Audit challenges also were discussed.

Wanda Helgesen, executive director of Border RAC TSA I, led the meeting.

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## **Texas Perinatal Forum Open to Subscribers**

Texas Perinatal Services has launched a new benefit for facilities that use TPS

for maternal designation verification surveys. The next **Texas Perinatal Services Forum**, open exclusively to TPS customers, will be **Jan. 22 at 1 p.m. CST**. The Forum is provided at **no charge** as a benefit of selecting TPS as the hospital's verification survey provider.

The teleconference calls bring together TPS participating hospitals' maternal program managers across the state, along with TPS experts, to share policies, best practices, challenges and innovative solutions to ensure compliance to the new Texas Maternal Rules. Customers can [register now](#) for the Jan. 22 Forum.

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## Upcoming Educational Programs

TETAF and The Society of Trauma Nurses – Texas Chapter will offer the "**Trauma Outcomes and Performance Improvement Course**" twice in February. TOPIC focuses on the ongoing assessment of the continuum of trauma care with a structured review of process and discussions of strategies to monitor trauma patient outcomes.

**A TOPIC course for Level IV trauma centers** is scheduled from **8 a.m. to noon on Feb. 27** in Austin in coordination with the GETAC meeting.

In response to the need for education and better understanding of the **Performance Improvement process in trauma care**, another TOPIC course is planned for **Feb. 27 in Austin**, to be held in conjunction with GETAC committee meetings. More information and registration information will be available soon on the TETAF website.

TETAF and the Coastal Bend RAC U are planning a **Hospital Data Management seminar** in February or March. The one-day seminar will be held in Corpus Christi; the date and location are being finalized and will be announced soon. This course is designed to improve the skill sets of hospital data entry specialists specific to data input, data abstraction and statistical reporting, which are used to improve the state's emergency care system.

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