TEXAS HEALTH CARE:
INADEQUATE STATE PROGRAMS ARE COSTLY TO ALL TEXANS

LWV-TX calls on the 83rd Texas Legislature to increase funding for health care programs serving the most vulnerable Texans: children, the disabled, women and men of lesser means, and the elderly. The benefits of improved health care funding extend beyond those receiving care. Inadequacies in current funding create significant problems in the financing, delivery, and costs of health care to all Texans.

Texas Leads the Nation in Those without Health Insurance & Access to Care

Without health care insurance, most cannot afford to access health care when needed. Unfortunately Texas ranks last among the states in the percentage of the population covered by health insurance.

- 5.6 million Texans are uninsured, 1 of every 4, including more than a million children.
- Texans are less likely to have employment-based health insurance than those in other states.
- Texas has one of the highest poverty rates, 30% above the national average.

Without employment-based health insurance, many cannot afford either private insurance or health services when needed. They may seek care only in an emergency when health services are most costly and least effective. If the individual is unable to pay for these services, the uncompensated costs are shifted to others: health care providers, individuals who pay for some or all of their care, employers providing insurance, and taxpayers. Uncompensated costs to hospitals are estimated at $5 billion a year.

Specific Health Care Needs

Medicaid. This partnership between the federal and state governments provides basic health care to low-income individuals, including children, pregnant women, the disabled, and elderly. It is only through Medicaid that many low-income Texans receive the care they need, including treatment for many serious illnesses. For every $1 the state pays, the federal government pays $1.54.

Because the 2011 Legislature underfunded Medicaid by $4.8 billion to balance the budget without using the Rainy Day Fund, the 2013 Legislature must provide supplemental funding by mid-March. The Affordable Care Act allows for expanded Medicaid coverage with an even more generous match from the federal government. By including Medicaid expansion in the next budget, $50.4 million in state funding would draw down $4 billion in federal match according to the Legislative Budget Board.

LWV-TX supports additional funding for Medicaid and expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Women’s Health & Reproductive Choice. In 2011 the state family planning program budget was cut by approximately two-thirds, resulting in severe cuts to well-women exams, cervical and breast cancer screening, and treatment of women and their partners for STI’s, as well as other preventive care.
Meanwhile, there is ongoing uncertainty and controversy about the new Texas Women’s Health Program. Using Medicaid funds, the previous program provided preventive family planning and other health services to women living at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, with the federal government paying 90% and the state 10% of these costs. Questions and concerns abound regarding the state-run successor program: Without Planned Parenthood and federal funds, will there be sufficient qualified providers to meet women’s health needs? Will there be adequate state funds to cover the costs?

_LWV-TX asks the 2013 Legislature to restore family planning funding to its previous level and to ensure the adequacy of funding and providers in the Women’s Health Program._

**Mental Health & Substance Abuse.** Funding for mental health and substance use disorders is seriously inadequate--Texas ranks 50th compared to all other states. Cuts in recent legislative sessions have resulted in higher costs for taxpayers. Untreated people are dysfunctional and unable to work. Many people become incarcerated. **Community-based mental health services cost about $12 per patient per day; prison costs about $137 per inmate per day.**

_State funding needs to be restored to at least 2009 levels, with increases to cover population growth. The Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Health Care Act is a significant opportunity for Texas to get federal funds returned to us for needed and effective treatment for 1.5 million more Texans._

**Children’s Health.** LWV-TX has supported the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) since it was passed by Congress in 1997. It provides federal matching funds to states for health insurance to families with children that do not qualify for children’s health coverage under Medicaid.

_Further expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Health Care Act would directly benefit children._

**The League of Women Voters of Texas Encourages the 83rd Texas Legislature to:**

- Fund the $4.8 billion that the last Legislature did not fund for Medicaid.
- Restore the $62 million that was cut from the state family planning program budget and ensure the adequacy of funding and providers in the Women’s Health Program.
- Restore cuts to mental health and substance use programs.
- Make use of all available federal funding for Texas health care needs, including the Medicaid expansion allowed under the Affordable Care Act.
- Increase funding to the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

**Resources**


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