



Getting Ready for Cover Texas Now! Health Care Lobby Day



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***Remember to wear
bright green,
like a green T-shirt,
on March 30th!***

***You are welcome to
bring signs to wave at
the mid-day rally, too.***

About these materials:

This packet was developed by the Texas Finish Line Campaign, in collaboration with Cover Texas Now. The Texas Finish Line Campaign works to ensure the state makes it to the finish line, where every Texas child has access to comprehensive and affordable health insurance. It is organized in Texas by the Children's Defense Fund – Texas, the Center for Public Policy Priorities, and Texans Care for Children, along with Methodist Healthcare Ministries and Texas Impact. The campaign collaborates closely with the Texas CHIP Coalition. To receive messages from the campaign, join us on the Texas Finish Line Campaign Facebook page today.



6 HELPFUL HINTS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

1. Be professional, positive, and polite.

Approach your meeting at the Capitol the way you would any meeting where you want to show respect. Be on time, and speak respectfully (e.g., avoid arguments). If you meet with a staff person instead of the legislator you expected, be positive. After all, this person has a lot of sway over your elected official's decisions—and this is just the person you want to be a resource for!

2. Introduce yourself, including where you are from and your story.

Lawmakers and their staff listen to constituents, so if you are this person's constituent, be sure to say you are from the representative or senator's district. Additionally, one of the most effective ways you can make your case is to share a story about why health care coverage is a personal concern to you. You don't have to know everything about a policy proposal: you simply need to know your story about why it matters. Commit to sharing your experience, and your authenticity will shine through.

3. Be sure to make your ask!

You came to the Capitol to ask for a policy change or support for something, so don't forget to do it! It is easy to get sidetracked with chit-chat, but be sure to follow through on what you came to the Capitol to ask for. Practice the request you will be making of your legislator beforehand, and promise yourself *you won't leave the room until you have made that ask*.

4. Save your "leave-behind" papers for the end of the meeting.

Have material to leave with the person you are meeting with? During the meeting the legislator or staffer should be focused on you and what you are saying. Wait to give your materials to him or her until the end of your meeting.

5. It's OK to say, "I don't know, but I can have someone get back to you on that."

If you get a question you don't know the answer to, that's OK! Reporting back to your Cover Texas Now organizers any follow-up we need to make. Simply write down questions you get that you are unable to answer, and we will be happy to follow up for you.

6. Send a thank you note.

Please send a thank you note to the person you met with, saying you appreciate their time with you. The thank you note is also a great opportunity to reinforce your message.



WHAT TO COVER DURING A LEGISLATIVE VISIT

Every legislative visit has three important parts. A worksheet later in this packet will guide you through them.

1. **The introduction** - Say who you are and where you are from
2. **The “pitch”** - Share what brings you to the Capitol.
 - Tell your personal story.
 - Talk about your specific concern. (Thank the office if you know the legislator shares this concern.)
 - *Potential talking points are on the next page for guidance if you need help knowing with what to say*
3. **The “ask”** – Conclude with the specific request you have for your legislator—the “what it is you want.” *If your legislator is already supportive, you may say “Will you continue to support___.”* Find some examples below and on the next page.

Policy Goal	Examples of how to ask for it
<i>Protect the Medicaid and CHIP program from cuts</i>	<p>“Will you support using the Rainy Day Fund to sustain funding for Medicaid and CHIP— programs that 9 out of 10 Texas voters want protected from cuts?”</p> <p>“Will you support more ‘healthy Texas’ revenue—like increasing tax revenue from cigarettes, alcohol, and/or sugary drinks—to bring in money for Medicaid and CHIP?”</p>
<i>Prevent provider reimbursement rate reductions</i>	<p>“Will you support maintaining provider reimbursement rates, as 9 out of 10 voters want, so that Texans continue to have access to doctors and hospitals, even if it requires drawing funds from the Rainy Day Fund or raising revenue?”</p>
<i>Improve the quality and value of health coverage for Texans</i>	<p>“Will you support the creation of a state-based health insurance exchange in Texas, so more Texans easily buy health insurance in a market that’s designed with consumers in mind?”</p> <p>“Will you support providing the Texas Department of Insurance with the authority to enforce popular policies such as prohibiting insurance companies from dropping people when they are sick, denying them for pre-existing conditions, or increasing rates without justification?”</p>



POTENTIAL TALKING POINTS TO BUILD YOUR CASE

Feel free to use these talking points during your meeting, as you build your case before making your ask to a legislator. Most of the talking points, save the last one, are designed for legislators who are undecided or potential opponents.

- **It's crucial to protect Medicaid and CHIP.**
Cuts at any level—whether to provider rates OR reducing funds at the federal level through Medicaid waivers—have the same effect: taking away health care for children, Texans with disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable groups.
- **Cuts to health coverage for children and other vulnerable populations will cost us—the taxpayers—more money, not less!**
Local governments have to pick up the cost and shift those costs to us. That plus the loss of OUR federal tax dollars, make the Texas taxpayer the loser with cuts at the state level.
- **We can also improve health coverage for Texans.**
Setting up a state health care exchange and ensuring that the Texas Department of Insurance has the authority to enforce policies that give better value and better coverage to Texans would do that.
- **Listen to the voters.**
 - 9 out of 10 voters polled want to avoid cuts to the children's health coverage program, including protecting provider reimbursement rates. By contrast, fewer than half care about a hike in the alcohol tax.
 - After the cuts in 2003, voters were so displeased that hundreds of thousands of kids lost their health care that many legislators lost their seats. The cuts this year are estimated to be 7 times more severe—voters will notice if they are not listened to.
- **A balanced approach to balancing the state budget is better than cuts to vital health care programs.**
Instead of just cuts, let's consider the Rainy Day Fund and other sources of revenue.
- **I've got some materials here that show the impact in your district of budget cuts.**
(You can point this out in your leave-behind materials, when you give it to them at the end of your meeting.)

If your legislator is already a supporter:

- **Thank you for supporting access to quality, affordable health care for Texans.**
I'd like to share my story about why your continued support makes such a difference. . .
(Share your experience and perspective.)



WORK SHEET FOR LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS: PREPARE WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

Use this worksheet to prepare your remarks during meetings with legislators on March 30th.

Introduction

Tip: Be sure to say not just who you are but where you live (e.g., in the legislator's district).

The Pitch – Build Your Case

Tip: Provide your personal story and concern about health care (e.g., "Medicaid has a big impact on my life, because...")

The Ask

Tip: Remember this is what you came for...Make your request before you go! (e.g., "Senator, will you support ...?")



Q&A: RESPONSES TO HAVE AT THE READY

Here are some questions you might get asked by a legislator or staff member you meet with, along with some suggested ways you can respond when it comes up.

With a deficit this big, I have to cut somewhere. What would you have me do?

Take a balanced approach to balancing the state budget. Texans don't want to harm the people who rely on services like Medicaid and CHIP—and in fact, certain tax hikes and spending the Rainy Day Fund are favored by more people than many of the cuts that are being considered. Over 85% of voters want payment for health care providers in Medicaid maintained and children's health care programs left untouched. Polls this year from the state's newspapers, the Texas Tribune, and the University of Texas also found that certain "healthy Texas" revenue options—like higher taxes on alcohol and tobacco—are more popular than cuts to children's health care programs. It's not too late to make decisions that are in line with what Texans say they want.

My district hates the new health care law. Are you here to talk about that?

The health care law isn't perfect, but if it remains the law, Texas needs to be as prepared as other states to carry out. Right now, what is on most Texans' mind is whether they will have good, affordable health care themselves. The unintended consequence of doing nothing or of trying to send a message to Washington is that some Texans' access to health care would become less secure. It would also be less secure than it is for residents of other states. No one wants that.

Shouldn't people be responsible for paying for their own or their children's health care?

Private health care premiums are rising much faster than most people's incomes. At a cost of over \$1,000 per month for a family of four, the price of private health insurance is just out of reach for many families with children. The large number of small businesses in our state struggle to pay that cost for their employees, as well. Yet having lots of uninsured people puts a burden on our hospital emergency rooms and can lead to public health problems spreading more quickly here in Texas.

Why is this the state's concern?

Insurance, including Medicaid and CHIP, matters for all of us: these programs help keep our hospitals open and ensure emergency rooms can work as intended. Giving Texans health coverage through programs like CHIP or Medicaid provides taxpayers great bang for the buck. It reduces the number of uninsured using the emergency room for every-day care.

Children in these programs also stay healthier, miss less school, and have parents who are able to show up to work more often, since they're not home with a sick child. The bottom line is, even if you don't use CHIP or Medicaid, you benefit: the health care system you rely on works better when there are fewer uninsured. Also, the state's future workforce is better off when kids can see a doctor when they need to.



MORE MESSAGING TIPS

Need more background for what you want to say? We have pulled some facts and tips for your consideration.

Messaging Tip	Example Talking Point	Background and Supporting Data
<p>When discussing health care coverage, try to use a positive, upbeat tone.</p>	<p><i>“Maintaining funding for Medicaid and CHIP programs and providers is good for kids, taxpayers, and jobs.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 265,000 permanent jobs will be saved if we can avoid Medicaid and CHIP cuts. This will help the Texas economy and ensure Texans who use health care services anywhere have the workforce to meet their needs. • The average Texan man, woman, and child—including those not served by the Medicaid or CHIP program—is \$680 better off. There will be more money in people’s pockets if these Medicaid and CHIP cuts get averted, stabilizing health care systems and local economies.
<p>Put a local, human face to the budget issues or the health care law to demonstrate impact.</p>	<p><i>“I’m here today because Medicaid has been a lifeline for my family.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we maintain Medicaid and CHIP, 2.9 million children will stay insured and able to see a doctor. They will remain healthier, miss less school, and cost taxpayers less over time, thanks to avoided trips to the emergency room and the consequences of good preventive care. • 140,000 women get prenatal care through Medicaid or CHIP that improves their babies’ chances of being born on time and at a healthy weight. • 170,000 seniors and Texans with disabilities receive Medicaid care that helps them stay in their homes and communities; 10,000 Texans with intellectual disabilities get support in residential living facilities, and another 63,000 seniors get nursing-home care through the program.
<p>Avoid drawn-out debates and controversy. Instead, talk about how the vast majority of voters want health care for Texans.</p>	<p><i>“Having affordable, quality health care available for Texans is something we all can agree about.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 out of 10 voters polled want to avoid cuts to children’s health insurance programs, according to a recent poll from the Texas Tribune and UT. Also, 9 out of 10 voters want provider reimbursement rates maintained not cut. (By contrast, fewer than half care about a hike in the alcohol tax.)
<p>Meet your listener halfway by softening how you talk about touchy subjects.</p>	<p><i>“The new national health care law isn’t perfect, but the Texas Legislature can improve the value of Texans’ health care.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By setting up a health insurance exchange, Texas has the chance to create a marketplace where small businesses and individuals can purchase health care affordably and easily, in a marketplace designed for Texans. For example, the exchange can and should be designed to integrate easily with Texas’ existing enrollment system for Medicaid and CHIP.



MESSAGES YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR NETWORKS

Wish folks in your life could join you in spirit at the Capitol for Lobby Day? You can let your friends, family, colleagues, and others in your network know what you're doing and how they can join with you in calling for Texas to Cover Texas Now!

Social media like Facebook and Twitter offer an easy way to spread the word about your Cover Texas Now activities. A sample Facebook "wall" post and "tweet" can be found below. *(You may also want to bring your camera so you can upload lobby day pictures or video to Flickr or YouTube.)*

Sample Facebook status update:

Off to Austin today to show my support for Medicaid, CHIP and the Affordable Care Act at health care lobby day. Join me in calling on lawmakers to Cover Texas Now by calling your Texas legislators today to say, "Protect Medicaid and CHIP in the Texas budget." Find contact info and who represents you: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>

Sample Tweet:

Join me in asking the #TxLege today to protect Medicaid, CHIP, and health care for Texans. Find your rep: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us>

Email action alerts are another great option for spreading the word, especially if you work with a community or nonprofit group that has an email list. Feel free to use the action alert language below.

*****ACTION ALERT*****

Tell Your Representatives in the Texas Legislature to "Cover Texas Now!"

On March 30th, hundreds of Texans will be at the Capitol asking state leaders to avoid harmful budget cuts to programs like Medicaid and CHIP and to move our state forward in the goal of insuring more Texans have access to health care. You may recall that after budget cuts in 2003, *over a quarter of a million children lost their health care*. Today's proposed cuts are estimated to be 7 times deeper, yet some legislators seem more interested in undoing the nation's new health care law than they are in connecting Texans to coverage.

Let's turn things around and get lawmakers thinking about how to Cover Texas Now!

Call or email your representative on Wednesday, March 30th, to say, "Protect Medicaid and CHIP from budget cuts, and help improve the quality and value of health coverage for Texans." To find out who represents you and how to contact your representatives in the House and Senate, visit <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us>. Also, contact:

Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst: (512) 463-0001; and
Speaker of the House Joe Straus : (512) 463-0000



LEGISLATIVE MEETING REPORT-BACK FORM

This is a sample of a form you will receive on March 30th to report back to Cover Texas Now! Organizers about what happened during your legislative visit. No need to use it now, but we want you to see it ahead of time so you'll be ready to fill it out.

Your Name: _____

Legislator: _____

Who did you meet with? (If staff, please provide name): _____

What did you ask for? _____

What response did you receive? _____

Were there questions that got asked or issues that came up you were unable to address? (If so, someone from Cover Texas Now can follow up for you)

Any other things that came up you want to share?



TAKING LOBBY DAY HOME WITH YOU

You can start thinking now about ways to keep the Cover Texas Now! momentum going strong, well after March 30th. Here are 10 ideas to get you started. Details for each can be found on the pages that follow.

1. Join the Save Our State Rally on April 6.
2. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
3. Visit legislators in their district office in your community.
4. Contact other key community leaders, like local officials who can help be a voice for health care in your community.
5. Submit an opinion article for the local paper or have a leading community member do so.
6. Find local voices, including business voices, to speak out about health coverage for Texans.
7. Speak to your newspaper's editorial board.
8. Use social media to spread the word about health care coverage for Texans.
9. Go on a local radio talk show or cable program.
10. Invite elected officials and the media to come see an organization that connects Texans to health coverage.

1. **Join the Save Our State Rally on April 6.**

Advocates are amassing as many people as possible for this rally in support of Texas education, public services, and public workers—and against a cuts-only approach to balancing the budget. Buses will be available from communities across the state. Participants will demand that Texas take a balanced approach to balancing the state budget by spending our state's savings in the Rainy Day Fund and finding new revenue. Bring your family and friends and wear your rain gear! Get on the email list and register directly at www.April62011.org. If you can't be at the rally in person, be sure to call your officials with your ideas about the state budget that day.

2. **Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.**

Letters to the editor of the local daily newspaper, news weekly, and other publications are typically short (less than 200 words, though shorter is often better and more likely to be published). Letters should address only one point and should be signed with the full name and contact information of the writer (not for publication, but so the editor can confirm you wrote it). Look at your newspaper's letters page or website for more advice on how to write a letter that will get published and where to submit it.

Note: some papers only publish letters that refer to stories or editorials the newspaper recently ran. If that's the case with your hometown paper, scan regularly for health insurance in the news. If you're responding to something in the paper, remember not to bury your own message by spending all your space refuting. You may also choose to write a letter about your experience at the Capitol with Cover Texas Now! The letter below is an example:

Sample Letter to the Editor

I just returned from a trip to the Capitol for health care lobby day. It's not surprising that hundreds of Texans joined me in calling on the state legislature to find better ways of balancing the budget, rather than making cuts to vital health care programs.

Polls show 9 out of 10 voters in Texas oppose cuts to health care programs like Medicaid and CHIP. That's why I was proud to ask [NAME OF REP AND/OR SENATOR] to look for ways to balance the budget without sacrificing health care for children and other vulnerable groups.

3. **Visit legislators in their district office in your community.**

Texas lawmakers have a home district office, as well as an office in the capitol in Austin. (Contact information for both offices can be found at <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>). During recesses and on weekends, many elected officials are in their home district offices. You can contact your state senator(s) and representative(s) about visiting them in their office to discuss health coverage for Texans. Mention your intention when you call, and you may be connected with a scheduler who will arrange for either a direct meeting with the legislator and/or a staff member who works on health policy. (Remember: establishing a relationship with staff is as important as developing relationships with elected officials themselves!)

4. **Contact other key community leaders, like local officials who can help be a voice for health care in your community.**

City council members, mayors, board members for local hospital districts, chambers of commerce leaders, and others can all make powerful allies. If you have connections with these individuals, ask them to contact state lawmakers about coverage for Texans.

5. **Submit an opinion article for the local paper or have a leading community member do so.**
Your paper's opinion page probably publishes some submissions from local residents called op-eds (i.e., OPposite the EDitorial page). You can submit a health coverage op-ed or have a well-known community member do so. Call the newspaper or check online to determine publishing guidelines (e.g., word count, who to send it to, appropriate format, etc.) and follow up after you have sent the submission to be sure the correct editor has it. Keep your message simple, with a strong opening sentence and a calm tone throughout that clearly gives your point of view, backed up by data (stories about local families, numbers of uninsured in your community, etc.).
6. **Find local voices, including business voices, to speak out about health coverage for Texans.**
As opponents continue to speak out about repealing the Affordable Care Act or attempting to balance the state budget through cuts alone, we need as many individuals as possible who will call, write, and testify about the importance of health coverage for Texans. Business champions for health coverage, affected families, and others can speak out, and we can provide support for their efforts. Have someone in mind? Call or email Laura Guerra-Cardus of the Children's Defense Fund: (713) 664-4080 or lguerracar@childrensdefense.org
7. **Speak to your local editorial board.**
Editorials are the opinions of the newspaper's editors that are often widely read by elected officials. Editorial writers are often looking for topics, so if you think your newspaper's general editorial disposition favors sustained funding for Medicaid and CHIP or effective health care reform implementation in Texas, this approach is worth a try. You would contact the paper and ask for the editorial page editor (at a larger paper, you might need to ask specifically for the editorial writer who writes about health). Request a meeting with that person to discuss health coverage issues in Texas. Attend your meeting equipped with fact sheets, local data, and other material you may have. Be prepared to explain the impact on local residents, what inadequate funding for Medicaid and CHIP means for your community, the ACA's likely impact in your area, etc. (To see a webinar from Texans Care for Children with tips for conducting editorial visits, go to <http://tinyurl.com/editorial-visits>)
8. **Use social media to spread the word about health care coverage for Texans.**
Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter make it incredibly easy to connect with others and encourage them to make calls to lawmakers, too. If you have a blog, you can use it, too, to connect with others, recruit petition-signers, and spread important messages as decisions get made in the Texas Legislature. Don't miss an opportunity to recruit your followers and friends for taking a few minutes out of their day to contact elected leaders about health care issues in Texas this session.
9. **Go on a local radio talk show or cable program.**
If you're familiar with a local radio program that talks to residents about the issues or a public cable channel that does so, consider putting together a three-paragraph "pitch letter" suggesting you would be available for an interview to discuss health coverage issues in Texas. Briefly explain the key messages you'll be discussing, how the problem affects local children and their families, and why you are qualified to talk about it. Address the letter to the show's

producer (call the station for the name) and call to follow up the day after it arrives.

10. Invite elected officials and the media to see an organization that connects Texans to health coverage.

If you work for an organization that enrolls families in public insurance programs, consider a public CHIP/Medicaid enrollment drive or a visit from an elected official to your office, as a way to bring more attention to the value of your agency in the community. Invite a legislator to come to your program on a Friday for a tour of your organization, if you feel the experience would provide a powerful perspective on challenges the uninsured in Texas face. Plan to have families who are good spokespersons for your organization available to talk to the legislators, have the tour well planned in advance, and invite the media to the event. Provide supporting materials that make the case for insuring more Texans.

Statewide Officials' Contact Information: For more, see www.texastribune.org/directory

Governor Rick Perry

P.O. Box 12428

Austin, Texas 78711-2428

(512) 463-2000

Lt. Governor David Dewhurst

Capitol Station

P.O. Box 12068

Austin, Texas 78711

(512) 463-0001

Texas Speaker of the House Joe Straus

Room CAP 2W.13

P.O. Box 2910

Austin, TX 78768

(512) 463-1000

Senator Steve Ogden (*Senate Finance
Committee Chair*)

P.O. Box 12068

Capitol Station

Austin, Texas 78711

(512) 463-0105

Representative Jim Pitts (*House
Appropriations Committee Chair*)

Room CAP GW.15

P.O. Box 2910

Austin, TX 78768

(512) 463-0516

Senator Jane Nelson (*Senate Health and
Human Services Committee Chair*)

P.O. Box 12068

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Austin, Texas 78711

(512) 463-0112

Representative Lois Kolkhorst (*House
Public Health Committee Chair*)

Room CAP GN.9

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