

Update on the 81st Texas Legislative Session

By Margie Dorman-O'Donnell, MSN, RN
(With appreciation for the support of TNA Staff Gretchen Birdwell and Jim Willmann, JD)

How does one spell SUCCESS? Texas Nurses Association, that's how!

What a session we just completed! Here's a snapshot of what nursing accomplished:

- **Nursing Education Funding (SB1) \$49.7 million** was appropriated to the Coordinating Board for nursing schools to increase enrollment and graduation rates to address the nursing shortage.
- **Staffing and Mandatory Overtime (SB 476)** – Hospitals will be required to adopt a policy which:
 1. requires a process for developing, implementing and enforcing a nursing unit and shift based staffing plan.
 2. sets minimal staffing levels for each patient care unit, each shift based on multiple nurse, patient and hospital considerations
 3. includes a method of adjusting the plan to meet changing patient needs
 4. provides a contingency plan if patient care needs exceed resources
 5. is given significant consideration by the hospital as recommended by the committee
 6. provides for a membership of a minimum of 60% direct care nursesThis bill also prohibits required mandatory overtime
- **Just Culture Environment expansion (SB 1415)** This bill allows:
 1. the BON more options when addressing minor practice violations including non-disciplinary, non-public corrective actions
 2. the BON to pilot the concept of deferred disciplinary action
 3. builds on SB 993 passed in the 2007 legislative session in support of a less punitive practice environment
- **Omnibus Bill (HB 3961)**
 1. Protects confidential personal contact information and personal health information collected by the BON
 2. Addresses the BON's use of psychological and physiological evaluations in disciplinary action
- **Surgical Techs (HB 643)** successful negotiated bill that carefully defined surgical technologists' scope of practice and maintains the supervision of the circulating OR RN.
- **HB 4355** - Texas Nurses Association successfully negotiated a compromise with Excelsior College to accept a research study on alternate ways to assure clinical competency of RN graduates and permits Excelsior graduates to be licensed pending the results of this study. Excelsior is a New York based nursing program that utilizes a single assessment competency rather than supervised clinical experience.
- **Sovereign Immunity** – Texas Nurses Association unsuccessfully attempted to address the lack of protections for publicly employed nurses

Since the 81st Legislative Session ended, Texas Nurses Association has actively supported the publicly employed nurses in Winkler County, Texas who were indicted for reporting practice concerns of a physician at the hospital they formerly worked in. [Winkler County Update](#)

TNA introduced 5 legislative initiatives and passed 4. There were a total of 7419 bills were introduced to the legislature and 1459 passed. Texas Nurses Association had to monitor all health related bills in order to identify those bills with implications for nursing.

The need for Texas Nurses Association is never ending and goes on each day of the year.

TNA NEEDS YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Join TNA in its efforts to protect and perfect OUR nursing practice here in Texas!