

What did the Texas Dental Association do for dentists and dental patients in the 84th Legislative Session?



Everything you need to know is inside this mailer!



Presence, testimony, and sought-after guidance by top decision makers—
it's all made possible because of the strength of TDA members.

Secured Tax Relief for Dentists

All Texas dentists will receive significant tax cuts as a result of action taken in the 84th Legislative Session. The TDA successfully advocated for elimination of \$200 on dentists' annual license fee and a 25% permanent rate cut to the state franchise tax. In addition to the rate cut, a majority of dental offices are now eligible to use the "E-Z computation and rate" to calculate and file their franchise tax.

Required Dental Insurance Plans to Coordinate Benefits

Texas dental patients will now receive the full benefit of their secondary dental insurance plans. The TDA successfully advocated passage of House Bill 3024 requiring state regulated dental insurance plans to better coordinate primary and secondary insurance coverage. What does this mean for Texas dental patients? HB 3024 prevents secondary carriers from using coverage terms to avoid payment. The balance on a dental claim is now clarified as the full, allowable amount of coverage, and not an arbitrary or confusing standard. This new requirement lowers patients' out-of-pocket cost and protects them from unexpected balances, making dental care more affordable, cost-predictable, and accessible.

Stopped Unwarranted Scope Expansions

As in previous legislative sessions, there were many attempts to expand the scope of practice of non-dentists. The TDA defeated several dangerous scope of practice expansion proposals including legislation to create a lesser-educated and trained mid-level dental provider (House Bill 1940) and permit dental hygienists to administer local anesthetic (House Bill 1409).

Safeguarded the Dental Profession

The TDA continues to work to enhance patient safety and protection. Senate Bill 519 requires dental support organizations (DSOs) to register with the state. Information included in this registration will further help the Texas State Board of Dental Examiners to identify DSOs and enforce existing state law against illegal ownership and non-dentist influence of dentists and dental practices.

Prevented Rate Cuts and Eliminated Red Tape in the Medicaid Program

Not only did the TDA help prevent budget cuts to dental Medicaid, we also supported legislation that reduces hassles for Medicaid participating dentists. Passage of House Bill 1661 allows dentists who must temporarily be absent from their practice to bill for Medicaid services provided by a substitute dentist—maintaining continuity of care for patients. In addition, passage of Senate Bill 200 eliminates unnecessary criminal background checks for Medicaid providers and streamlines enrollment by consolidating the enrollment and credentialing process. Also, passage of Senate Bill 207 clarifies the definition of fraud and establishes clear timelines and criteria for Medicaid fraud investigations by the Office of the Inspector General.

Eliminated Controlled Substance Registration Backlogs

Texas dentists will no longer be forced to haggle with the state over controlled substances registration (Senate Bill 195). Effective September 1, 2016, the state's controlled substance registration program at the Department of Public Safety and the fee associated will be eliminated. Going forward, dentists will only need a federal Drug Enforcement Administration registration. Additionally, the Texas prescription drug monitoring program will be administered by the Texas State Board of Pharmacy and dentists will pay a smaller fee than before.

Preserved Dentists' Independent Professional Judgment

TDA strongly advocated to protect dentists' independent professional judgment through action to defeat House Bill 2330. The proposal would have taken existing rules governing improper influence on professional judgment, amended them, and locked them in statute. This approach would have resulted in a vastly different regulatory environment. Additionally, the bill would have prevented the dental board from taking any future action on certain rules to enforce the Dental Practice Act. TDA believes and defends the principle that The Texas State Board of Dental Examiners must maintain its ability to properly regulate dentistry—regardless of practice setting—in order to protect patients and dentists.

Secured Funding for Dental Schools

TDA successfully worked with the dental schools and the legislature to secure additional state funding including \$72 million to Baylor College of Dentistry for capital projects. TDA also partnered with the schools in an attempt to change the funding methodology for dental school clinic operations. The legislature fell short of addressing this effort and TDA will likely work for it again next session.

Improved Access to Dental Care

Increasing access to dental care is always a top priority of the TDA. This session, lawmakers reinstated funding for Texas' Dental Education Loan Repayment Program to help dentists afford to practice in rural and underserved areas of the state. This program helps reduce the number of adults and children with untreated dental disease by providing access now to patients in need. More funding for this valuable program is needed and TDA will continue to work to secure it.

Additionally, more dental assistants will be able to perform coronal polishing. TDA joined with other stakeholders for passage of House Bill 2849 which expands the list of eligible locations that may offer the coronal polishing certification course. Passage of this measure will allow dental assistants in rural areas of the state to access the course which will increase the number of them qualified to perform the procedure.

Also, with TDA support, Senate Bill 550 was finally passed after years of work. The law requires dental insurance to be included with health insurance in child support orders.

Enhanced Texas' Oral Health Infrastructure

TDA amended the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) sunset bill—Senate Bill 200—to mandate HHSC's dental director be a Texas-licensed dentist. This ensures that all HHSC dental programs are led by a dentist who has the appropriate level of education and training that the dental director position demands.



The Texas Dental Association maintains a strong advocacy program on behalf of dentistry in Texas. Are you a member? We'd be honored to have you join us and further strengthen our efforts. For more information about becoming a TDA member, please call 512-443-3675.