

TETAF Advocacy Report

88TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO AND LEAD ADVOCATE

The 88th Texas Legislature was unprecedented with a historic \$33 billion surplus in the budget. Unlike the 87th Texas Legislative Session that was affected in the beginning by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Capitol was bustling with activity as soon as the legislature convened on January 10, 2023. Knowing there were opportunities to work for a stronger trauma care, emergency health care, and perinatal care systems, TETAF strategized early. This was imperative to clearly advocating needs since many state agencies and organizations were vying for funding.

Face-to-face meetings and in-person testimony returned this session after a brief pause during the previous session. This was advantageous

to productive meetings and critical to having our priorities heard by legislators and staff. TETAF also provided public testimony at the Capitol, conducted bi-weekly meetings with the TETAF Legislative Work Group, created handouts and sample letters for stakeholders to advocate, and spent numerous hours speaking with legislators. In addition, to monitoring more than 90 bills and providing input on many, TETAF drafted and submitted two legislative riders. One rider requested funding for a statewide perinatal database and the other requested funding for the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).

One of the most significant wins during this legislative session was legislators appropriating \$6.6 million for the biennium to the RACs. This increase is the largest since RAC funding was established and is an almost 70% increase in funding. This win reflects the importance of advocating during the interim. Prior to session, TETAF leadership met with leaders from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and in a January follow-up conversation, DSHS leadership shared that the agency would update its exceptional item requests to include a request of \$6.6 million for the RACs.

As the 88th Texas Legislative Session, Regular, concluded, the work of the TETAF Advocacy team continued as a special session, possibly more, are held. The deadline for Governor Greg Abbott to veto bills was June 18, 2023. The bills you will read about in this report did not get vetoed.

Thank you to all who took an active role in advocating for these and other priorities during this session. It is an honor to work with all of you and serve as the voice for trauma, emergency, and perinatal care at the Capitol. I encourage you to remain engaged as the work continues during the interim as we prepare for the 89th Texas Legislature in 2025.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dinah Welsh', written in a cursive style.

Dinah Welsh
TETAF President and Chief Executive Officer

TETAF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The TETAF Legislative Priorities were developed by the TETAF Advocacy team and approved by the TETAF Board of Directors prior to the start of the 88th Texas Legislative Session.

Preserve & Increase Funding for Regional Health Care Systems

Historic population growth and growing demands on the system have solidified an ever-increasing demand for trauma, emergency, and disaster-related health care services. Rural communities already are experiencing a lack of access to timely emergency health care. Urban areas have more resources but still struggle to maintain services. The health care system has been stretched to the limit with Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), the Emergency Medical Task Force, and hospitals serving as frontline responders during disasters.

TETAF supports increased funding for the state's trauma system. Each aspect of the trauma and emergency health care system – trauma hospitals, EMS providers, and RACs – must be adequately funded to support all Texans when unplanned needs arise.

TETAF supports increased funding to strengthen regional health care systems through the following priorities:

Increased Funding for Regional Advisory Councils

RACs are regularly engaged in coordinating regional trauma and emergency preparedness, improving cardiac, stroke, and perinatal systems of care, and educating communities on injury prevention. While the state's expectations of these entities has increased significantly since creation in 1989, funding has not kept up with demand. Increasing funding for the system is critical.

Improve and Fund Statewide Health Data Collection Efforts

While the State of Texas has historically provided funds for a statewide trauma registry, the data collected and shared has lacked robust, timely value to truly impact responses and improve patient outcomes. RACs have initiated regional data collection efforts to improve trauma, cardiac and stroke outcomes; however, a coordinated statewide initiative for trauma, cardiac, and stroke data is needed.

Establish a Statewide Perinatal Database

While it is believed that levels of care designations for neonatal and maternal care have improved care for mothers and babies, Texas lacks the patient-level data to verify. Texas should fund the establishment of a statewide perinatal database to gather consistent data, through an established and reliable process.

Improve Efforts Focused on the Health Care Worker Shortage

The health care workforce has faced unprecedented demands during the COVID-19 pandemic which have now been followed by higher costs for wages and fewer qualified individuals. Additional efforts and funding are needed to provide more recruiting and training within the hospital and pre-hospital settings.

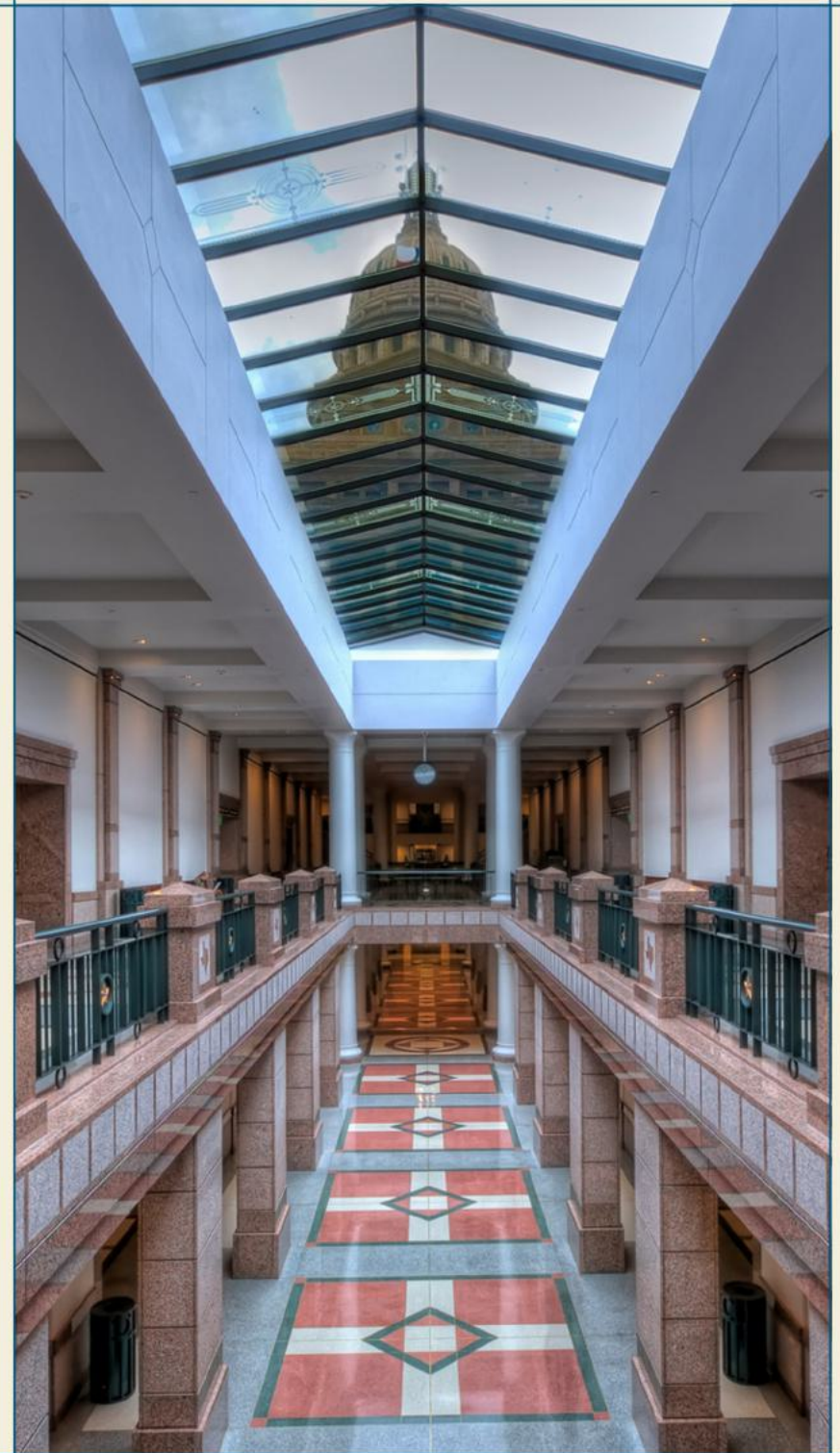
FROM AN UNORTHODOX TO AN UNPRECEDENTED SESSION

The 88th Texas Legislature was vastly different from its predecessor. While the COVID-19 pandemic was previously in the spotlight, this session Texas had a record \$33 billion budget surplus. Many state agencies and organizations were vying for funds, compounding to the challenge of advocating the TETAF Legislative Priorities.

The TETAF Advocacy team, consisting of staff, the TETAF Advocacy Committee, and the lobby team, strategized frequently during the interim. Determining the priorities early was critical to prioritizing the focus for what TETAF should advocate and what TETAF should provide support to other organizations. This provided the opportunity to have conversations prior to and at the start of the legislative session with state leaders and legislators. This included informal discussions beginning in 2022 and an initial meeting with leadership from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in August 2022.

In January 2023, Dr. Craig Rhyne (Chair of the TETAF Board of Directors), Wanda Helgesen (TETAF Board of Directors member and Chair of the TETAF Advocacy Committee), and Dinah Welsh (TETAF President/CEO) met again with leadership at DSHS. This meeting resulted in DSHS including an exceptional item of \$6.6 million for the biennium to the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), recognizing the increased responsibilities of the RACs. This funding was approved by the House and Senate during the 88th Legislative Session.

TETAF maintained this momentum of strategic, in-person meetings throughout the session. As priorities remained in focus, TETAF made the decision to not conduct a Day at the Capitol or Legislative Focus Week as done during past sessions. Instead, the team used that time for key legislative meetings. This was paramount to ensuring TETAF had a strong voice at the Capitol and for legislators to understand the importance of each TETAF Legislative Priority.



A photograph of the Texas State Capitol building in Austin, Texas. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent central dome topped by a statue. The Texas state flag flies from a pole in front of the dome. The building is surrounded by a well-manicured lawn with green hedges and yellow flowers in the foreground. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

88TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF THE
TRAUMA, EMERGENCY, AND PERINATAL CARE SYSTEMS



and organizations presenting their funding asks. With constitutional spending caps that limit how much of the surplus Texas legislators can spend, plus significantly large funding priorities outlined by Governor Greg Abbott that included property tax relief and strengthening the state's electrical grid, it was evident that the funds available to spend in the surplus could be quickly appropriated.

TETAF worked prior to the legislative session meeting with leadership from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in August 2022. In a January 2023 follow-up conversation, DSHS leadership shared that the agency would update its exceptional item requests to include a request of \$6.6 million for the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).

Then in February, TETAF Board of Directors member and Advocacy Chair, Wanda Helgesen, traveled to Austin two weeks in a row to provide public and written testimony during the Senate Finance Committee hearing on Article II of the state budget and then the House Appropriations Committee hearing on Article II. Article II focuses on the budget for Texas Health and Human Services and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Helgesen testified not only as a member of the TETAF Board but also as executive director of the Border RAC.

HOUSE BILL 1 - STATE BUDGET

With a \$33 billion surplus in the state's budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the TETAF Advocacy team knew the 88th Texas Legislative Session would be focused on advocating for funding the TETAF Legislative Priorities. The overall challenge would be ensuring key legislators not only heard about the priorities but understood why it was essential for the state to appropriate funding for these specific needs.

There were many long days filled with hours of testimony from state agencies

Throughout the remainder of the session, the TETAF Advocacy team conducted numerous meetings and calls, plus provided stakeholders with talking points, handouts, and letters to also advocate for funding for the RACs and a statewide perinatal database.

Among the appropriations in the state budget is \$6.6 million for the biennium to the RACs. This increase is the largest since RAC funding was established and is an almost 70% increase in funding.

ACCOUNT 5111 – ENSURING LEVEL FUNDING FOR THE STATE’S TRAUMA SYSTEM

The dedicated account to provide funding for the Texas Trauma System is known as Account 5111. TETAF has a long history of advocating for funding to Account 5111. This session, the priority was to ensure level funding due to collections for Account 5111 decreasing.

The legislature acknowledged this by appropriating General Revenue dollars to make up the difference. A total of \$96 million for FY24 and \$98.1 million for FY25 will be appropriated to Account 5111. In addition, Sen. Joan Huffman (R-Houston), chair of the Senate Finance Committee, intends to examine current collections and determine where improvements need to be made during the next legislative session.

Additionally, House Bill 1 requires a report from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission on uncompensated trauma care provided throughout Texas. The report will provide information on the amount of funds hospitals receive through governmental entities for uncompensated trauma care and payments received by physicians, or physician groups, for providing medical care to uninsured trauma patients. TETAF will monitor and provide input where appropriate.





ask to meet their needs for the biennium and submitted a rider to request funding.

The 22 RACs sought \$25 million for the biennium, which included:

- \$6 million for operations;
- \$5 million for outreach and education programs to decrease death and disability;
- \$5 million for mass casualty incident training;
- \$4 million for data collection and analysis at the RAC level to support quality improvement initiatives, and
- \$5 million for a statewide perinatal database, an initiative of the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies.

The Texas Legislature appropriated \$6.6 million for the biennium to the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) recognizing the increased demands of the RACs. This increase is the largest since RAC funding was established and is an almost 70% increase in funding.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE APPROPRIATES FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

The scope of work for the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) has expanded significantly to include disaster readiness and response, and efforts to improve cardiac, stroke, maternal, and neonatal systems of care. The TETAF Advocacy Committee worked with the RACs to determine the appropriate

ADVOCATING FOR MOTHERS AND NEWBORNS IN TEXAS

The Texas Legislature prioritized birth outcomes during the legislative session. While it is believed that levels of care designations for neonatal and maternal care have improved care for mothers and babies, Texas lacks the granular, patient-centric data to have a more comprehensive perspective to improve the outcomes of the most fragile newborns and vulnerable mothers in Texas.

As one of the TETAF Legislative Priorities, TETAF advocated for \$5 million in funding to establish a statewide perinatal database to gather consistent data, through an established and reliable process. TETAF drafted and submitted a rider requesting this funding.

TETAF worked with the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB), which is the perinatal quality collaborative for Texas. TCHMB developed a white paper outlining the critical need for a statewide perinatal database that could not only help to improve maternal outcomes, but also the health and safety of approximately 400,000 babies born annually in Texas.

The TETAF Advocacy team held meetings with key legislators, submitted letters, and developed template letters and documents that were shared with a broad base of perinatal supporters in Texas, including competitors with TETAF's perinatal division, Texas Perinatal Services.

Legislators approved \$10.9 million for the biennium for the Maternal Health Quality Improvement System and Maternal Mortality Review Information Application to improve data quality; however, it is not the statewide perinatal database that TETAF and other organizations advocated to improve outcomes for mothers and newborns in Texas. The TETAF Advocacy team will continue during the interim and during the 89th Texas Legislature to advocate for opportunities that lead to greater perinatal outcomes.





carrying that legislation.

This included monitoring more than 90 bills and dozens of legislative riders requesting various funding needs including those for rural and urban hospital needs and the Texas Emergency Medical Task Force. The bills monitored ranged from the duration of services provided under Medicaid to women following a pregnancy to a bill relating to the emergency medical transport of patients by firefighters. TETAF closely watches for bills filed late including one relating to medical examinations required for admission to a mental health facility. This bill could have resulted in more individuals being transferred to emergency departments to meet the proposed medical clearance criteria and create unnecessary costs and delays in admission to psychiatric hospitals.

Governor Greg Abbott vetoed a total of 76 bills for the 88th Texas Legislative Session, which is the second highest number of bills vetoed on record. Former Gov. Rick Perry holds the record for most vetoes, issuing 83 during the 77th Texas Legislative Session. TETAF monitored this process to the deadline to veto bills on June 18, 2023. None of the bills TETAF supported were vetoed.

GOING BEYOND THE TETAF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT IMPORTANT TRAUMA, EMERGENCY, AND PERINATAL NEEDS

TETAF routinely monitors any legislation relating to the Texas Trauma System, emergency care, and perinatal care. Any legislation that is not part of the TETAF Legislative Priorities, but could strengthen how care is provided in Texas, TETAF will offer and provide support to organizations

Any legislation that could result in a positive or potentially negative impact to trauma, stroke, maternal, neonatal, and emergency care, plus the Regional Advisory Councils, the TETAF Advocacy team will take an active role to ensure legislators understand why legislation could help or hurt our emergency and health care system in Texas.

SUPPORTING STOP THE BLEED AWARENESS IN TEXAS

TETAF was honored to once again work with the Stop the Bleed Texas Coalition to have a proclamation issued by Governor Greg Abbott recognizing May as Bleeding Control Month in Texas.

Uncontrolled bleeding from an extremity is the #1 cause of preventable death in trauma. During the 86th Texas Legislative Session, House Bill 496 was passed which mandated that bleeding control kits must be in every school and required all Texas public and charter school personnel to participate in Stop the Bleed training.

There are 10,654 Stop the Bleed instructors registered in Texas, the highest number of trained instructors in the United States. Check with your RAC to find out more about courses in your area.



THE STATE OF TEXAS GOVERNOR

*To all to whom these presents shall come,
Greetings: Know ye that this official recognition is
presented to all observing*

Bleeding Control Month May 2023

From automobile collisions and workplace accidents to natural disasters and violent crime, life-threatening crises can arise with no forewarning. In the event of a traumatic injury, time is of the essence because one can bleed to death in a matter of minutes. Each year, tens of thousands of lives are cut short due to blood loss, a leading cause of trauma fatalities in the United States. The sheer scope of loss of life due to uncontrolled bleeding, though certainly vast, must not blind us to the reality that each such loss represents a cherished human being taken too soon and a family forever altered. These deaths are tragic in the fullest sense because they are, in many instances, preventable. Vigilance and proper training save lives, and to this end, such simple techniques as wound packing and tourniquet application prevent as many as twenty percent of trauma deaths.

At the heart of the Texas spirit lies an abiding desire to help those in need, and by educating ourselves about bleeding control, we will be prepared if ever we are called upon to save the life of a friend or neighbor. With a basic understanding of tools, techniques, and warning signs, one can respond at the very instant calamity strikes. Moreover, this lifesaving knowledge can be acquired in short order, and dedicated organizations throughout our state and nation train participants to STOP THE BLEED® in an informative, 90-minute course. By so doing, these groups empower individuals to become heroic responders rather than mere witnesses to tragedy.

At this time, I commend the many entities that shed light on uncontrolled bleeding, and I encourage every Texan to learn more about this pressing matter.

First Lady Cecilia Abbott joins me in extending best wishes.



In testimony whereof, I have signed my name and caused the Seal of the State of Texas to be affixed at the City of Austin this the 21st day of April, 2023.

Greg Abbott
Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas



THE ADVOCACY PROCESS

A TEAM OF ADVOCATES



Dinah Welsh
TETAF President/CEO and
Lead Advocate



Wanda Helgesen
TETAF Advocacy Chair and
TETAF Board of Directors



Brian Yarbrough
Co-Founder, Erben &
Yarbrough



Ashley Morgan
Erben & Yarbrough



Janiece Williams
Erben & Yarbrough

TETAF president and CEO, Dinah Welsh, serves as the lead advocate bringing more than two decades of experience producing positive results advocating for trauma, emergency, and perinatal care issues. The effort to change legislation takes a knowledgeable leader and a team of legislative experts working cohesively with Welsh to address and monitor numerous issues throughout the session to ensure the best health and emergency care for Texans.

The team at Erben & Yarbrough in Austin, consisting of Brian Yarbrough, Ashley Morgan, and Janiece Williams, strategize during the interim with Welsh and the TETAF Advocacy Committee. The committee, consisting of members of the TETAF Board of Directors, have trauma, emergency, disaster, perinatal, and regional health system expertise. That expertise, combined with Welsh's extensive advocacy background in health care and the legislative skills of Erben & Yarbrough, gives TETAF a strong voice at the Capitol.

TETAF Advocacy Committee

Wanda Helgesen, chair
Sophie Bassham
Jordan Ghawi
Christine Reeves
Ricky Reeves
George Saade, MD
Shawn Salter
Debra Taylor
David Weisoly, DO



Every other week, TETAF hosted a Zoom meeting for the TETAF Legislative Work Group, which consisted of more than 140 stakeholders across Texas who share their knowledge with the TETAF Advocacy team. TETAF provided updates on its priorities and bills of note, along with providing legislative tools and documents to streamline the advocacy process as they contacted their legislators. The documents included a template letter and template email, along with talking points and a handout.

TETAF is greatly appreciative of the ongoing support of our stakeholders who not only lead in their roles to ensure quality trauma, stroke, maternal, neonatal, and emergency care in Texas, but make the time to advocate for world-class care for all Texans.

THE SUPPORT OF STAKEHOLDERS – TETAF LEGISLATIVE WORK GROUP

With 150 members of the Texas House of Representatives and 31 members of the Texas Senate, it takes passionate stakeholders in all corners of the state to support TETAF's advocacy efforts. This session, there were more than 8,000 bills filed in addition to determining the state budget. TETAF's stakeholders have an important role in ensuring the TETAF Legislative Priorities are heard by their legislators.

THE VALUE OF TESTIMONY

The definition of testimony means, “evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something.” Testimony during a legislative session provides the additional information legislators need and gives value to the importance of the legislative request.

The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and Texas Trauma System are fortunate to have Border RAC executive director Wanda Helgesen in their corner. Helgesen traveled from El Paso to Austin twice in February to provide public and written testimony regarding the TETAF RAC Funding Request at the Texas Capitol. Helgesen, who is also a member of the TETAF Board of Directors and the chair of the TETAF Advocacy Committee, testified during a Senate Finance Committee hearing and a House Appropriations Committee hearing.

There were additional opportunities to testify prior to the 88th Texas Legislative Session. In June 2022, TETAF Board of Directors member, Dr. David Weisoly and former TETAF Board member, Eric Epley, testified on the public health data interim charge during the Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee hearing. TETAF President and CEO Dinah Welsh testified during a Legislative Budget Board hearing in September 2022. Welsh provided testimony regarding the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Legislative Appropriations Request.

Testimony provides the opportunity to provide the evidence needed to support a legislative ask. TETAF will continue to seek opportunities to present the appropriate facts for making a positive change for quality trauma, stroke, maternal, and neonatal care in Texas.



A low-angle photograph of the Texas State Capitol dome, showing its intricate architectural details and the statue of Liberty on top. The dome is light-colored stone. To the right of the dome, the American flag and the Texas state flag are flying on a tall pole. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue with a few white clouds on the right side. The text "BEYOND THE DOME" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

BEYOND THE DOME

ALWAYS ADVOCATING – AT THE CAPITOL AND BEYOND

The legislative session is only a portion of the efforts to advocate for greater patient care and regional health care delivery. TETAF, and its perinatal division, Texas Perinatal Services, actively participate in meetings throughout the year with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC), and the Perinatal Advisory Council (PAC), among many other organizations. The collaboration is pivotal as each organization works to ensure quality trauma, emergency, and perinatal care never ends.

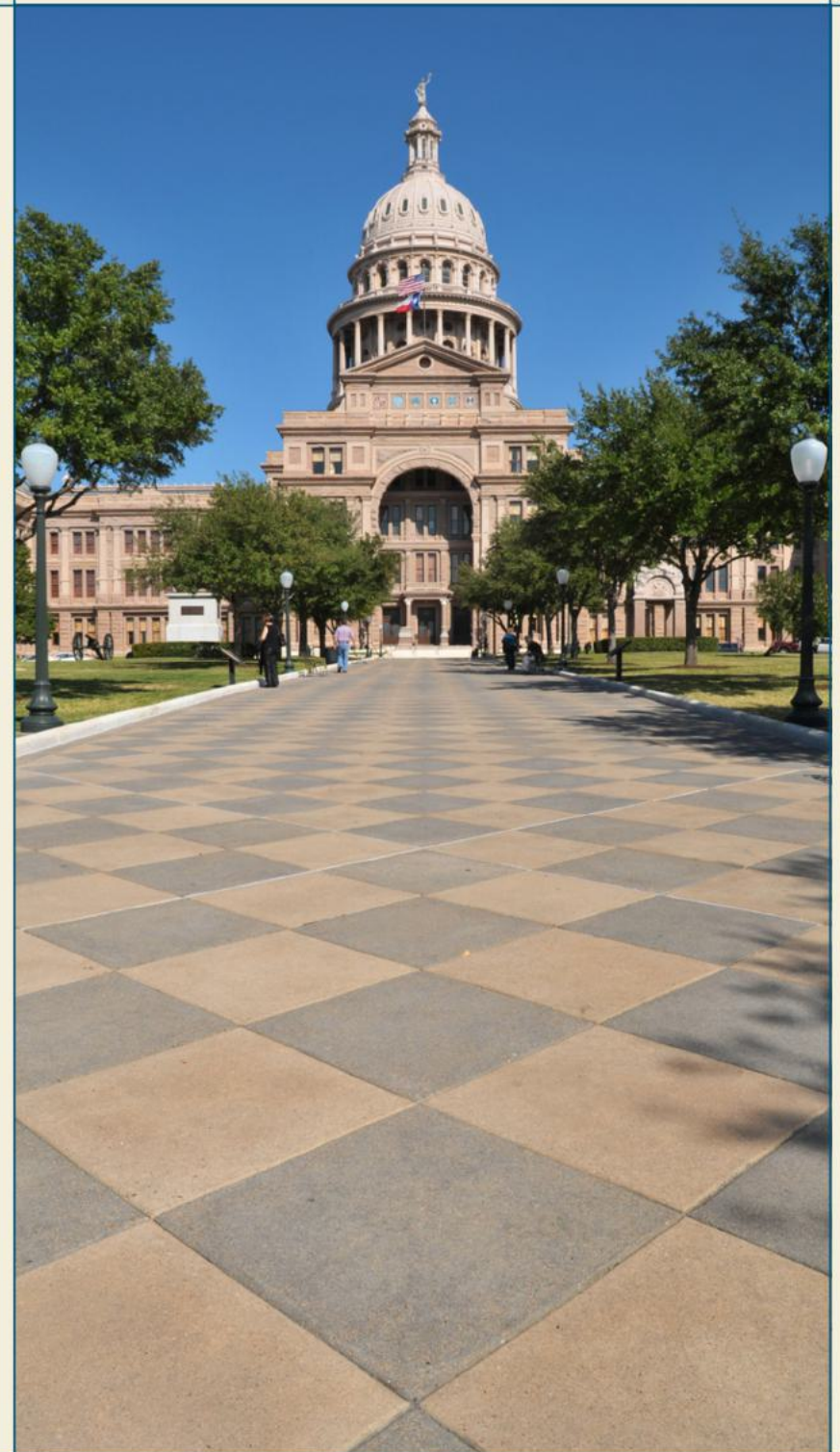
Whether it is submitting a letter, attending a meeting, or having discussions with state leaders and legislators, TETAF will always focus on what is best for patient outcomes and emergency care in Texas.



IN THE INTERIM

After the final day of the 88th Texas Legislative Session, known as Sine Die, the TETAF Advocacy Committee met again to recap its work during the session and plan its next steps. It is not anticipated that any items pertaining to trauma, emergency, and perinatal health care systems will be presented during a special session, however, the TETAF Advocacy Committee will remain vigilant monitoring activities and discussions.

Effective public policy goes beyond 140 days of work. It takes months of strategy, discussions, and planning to prepare legislation that benefits Texans. Since 2009, TETAF has successfully advocated at the Texas Capitol. As long as there is a need for trauma care, emergency and acute care, maternal care, and neonatal care in Texas, TETAF will continue to advocate to strengthen these systems so Texans can receive world-class care.



TETAF BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Craig Rhyne, M.D.
Chair



Dudley Wait, EMT-P
Vice Chair



Ricky Reeves, EMT-P
Secretary



Kathy Perkins, RN, MBA
Treasurer



Christine Reeves
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Scott Christopher, BBA,
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Wanda Helgesen,
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Dan Little, M.D.



Rhonda Manor-Coombes,
BSN, RN, TCRN



Kenneth Mattox, M.D.,
FACS



Joseph Petty, M.D.,
MBA



Edward Racht, M.D.



Kate Schaefer, RN,
CEN, NREMT



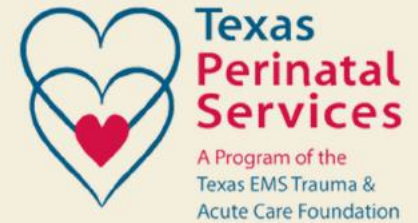
Danny Updike, RN,
CCRN, EMT-LP



David Weisoly, D.O.

OUR MISSION

The Texas EMS Trauma & Acute Care Foundation's mission is to strengthen regional health care delivery systems through collaboration, advocacy, and education.



TEXAS EMS, TRAUMA & ACUTE CARE FOUNDATION

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