

# Session Is Over, Was Anything but Typical

The 80<sup>th</sup> legislative session is over and members have returned to their districts. While this session was not typical by most people's accounts, it certainly taught me a lesson or two.



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## *Postcards From the Ledge*

The Legislative Council has put together a report card of this session's activity. (We believe in transparency, too!) The report card can be found here:

<http://www.tahu.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=6>

Make sure to log in, as this report card will be available to TAHU members only. Please, do not publish this report in your newsletters or on your web site.

### ***Interesting Session Facts***

We sent six Operation Shouts this session. Here are the results from each of them:

January - Legislator Welcome Back, **57** TAHU members participated.

February - TAHU Initiatives, **29** TAHU members participated.

April - Balance Billing, **112** TAHU members participated.

April - Oppose standardized contracts, **75** TAHU members participated.

May - Support HSA bill in House vote, **113** TAHU members participated.

May - Oppose HB 1919 in House vote, **103** TAHU members participated.

\*Note: TAHU has more than 1600 members, so fewer than 8% of our members participated in these Operation Shouts.

In the House Insurance committee, nine public hearings were held. Of those, one was devoted to P&C legislation; and two were devoted to lengthy discussions of coastal windstorm insurance concerns. Take those away and that means House Insurance devoted **six** public hearings to legislation on **life and health**.

Of course, information about any bill can be found on the Capitol website: [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)

My sincerest hope is that you will **all** get involved with legislation, ask questions about it and participate in changing our industry. Lawmakers respond to their constituents! You are someone's constituent! Make your voice heard.

### ***It's Not Over 'Till It's Over***

There isn't a better example of that old Jefferson Starship line than what happened to Senate Bill 23, the bill that focused on the small employer market and small group agent.

SB 23 came out of the senate committee and full senate cleanly, although it was a few weeks behind the schedule we expected it to track. Still it went to the House with plenty of time left to get through the committee which it did easily and then be scheduled for floor debate.

That's where the wheels started coming off as the House tacked on 23 amendments. Some were good ones we liked, such as the state employee HSA option or setting up a mechanism for balance billing by providers. Some were just okay, like the "silent PPO" regulation. But most were bad, bad, bad, like requiring a "consumer report card" by HMOs or PPOs or mandating a \$5 million lifetime benefit maximum. There were many others which we'll detail in future updates and C.E. sessions. The Senate said "no way" to the 23 amendments which sent the bill to a committee of House members and senators to reach a compromise. When all was said and done, the compromise had stripped out all the amendments, good, bad and merely ugly, and this final version went back to both chambers for a last, single, up and down vote.

The Senate adopted the compromise 30-0 in the afternoon. With four hours left in the session that night, after making a few damning remarks about the Senate's removing their amendments, House members voted 137-2 not to even bring the bill up for a final vote, thus abruptly ending this session's legislative journey for one of the most interesting health insurance bills in years.

**Questions?** Contact any member of the Legislative Council: Misty Baker, [mistyb@onebox.com](mailto:mistyb@onebox.com); Rusty Rice, [rrice@avesis.com](mailto:rrice@avesis.com); Jacqueline St. Hilaire, [jacquelines@safeguard.net](mailto:jacquelines@safeguard.net); Joe Phifer, [JoeP@safeguard.net](mailto:JoeP@safeguard.net); Gary Waldron, [gwaldron@prescottpaillet.com](mailto:gwaldron@prescottpaillet.com); Kelly Fristoe, [kfristoe@wf.net](mailto:kfristoe@wf.net); Lee Manross, [Imanross@aol.com](mailto:Imanross@aol.com); Shirley Hutzler, [shirly270@aol.com](mailto:shirly270@aol.com))