



Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Press Release

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"GROVER'S TUB: 'THE REAL STATE OF TEXAS HEALTH CARE'"

"Contrary to what Perry told us in Austin, Texas lost 25,700 jobs in December. As of January 3, 218,000 Texans had filed unemployment claims, making employer based health insurance that much harder to keep. In the coming months, another 111,000 Texans will lose jobs—and the health care that comes with it."

Earlier this week, Rick Perry gave his state of the state speech. Here's what he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, the State of our State is good."

Here's what he did not say: "Texas government is failing Texans." Sadly, that's the real state of the state. Just what is going on in Austin with your health care?

Here is the reality behind the rhetoric. [5.83 million Texans do not have health insurance](#)—one in four—making Texas the least insured state in the nation. Not a single Texas city even reaches the national average in citizens with health insurance. From 2000 to 2007, Texas families saw their [health insurance premiums soar 86.8 percent—nearly six times more than their median earnings increased](#). Twenty-nine cents of every private pay health dollar now goes for denial management and administration—in other words, Texans are paying more for less health care.

When it comes to health care professionals, Texas has fewer physicians and nurses per capita than any large industrial state. Nationally, Americans can expect 214 doctors for every 100,000 Americans; but here [in Texas, that number is 171](#). In the Border counties, the number is even lower—[only 109 per 100,000 in El Paso County in 2008](#).

Contrary to what Perry told us in Austin, [Texas lost 25,700 jobs](#) in December. As of January 3, [218,000 Texans had filed unemployment claims](#), making employer based health insurance that much harder to keep. In the coming months, [another 111,000 Texans will lose jobs](#)—and the health care that comes with it.

On issues related to mental health, [Texas spends less than all but two states](#): New Mexico and Arkansas. At the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the agency charged with care for our most vulnerable citizens, the [U.S. Department of Justice recently expanded their investigation of abuse, neglect, and even lack of basic care](#) to include every single state school for the mentally retarded.

How did our challenges get so big? What happened to our great state?

Grover happened. Grover Norquist is the famed right wing ideologue who said his goal was "to cut government in half in 25 years to get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub." When Rick Perry gathered a few representatives on the House floor years ago to start his legacy project of cutting taxes for the wealthy and cutting programs for the middle class, he and his band of Pit Bulls put Texas on a path to Grover's tub.

Now, we are there—Texas is in Grover's Tub. Nowhere else has the Norquist philosophy been so apparent and so harmful than on the health of Texans.

After the disastrous budget cuts of 2003, Perry traveled to the Bahamas with Grover Norquist to brag about kicking 200,000 children out of CHIP. On February 5th, President Obama signed expansion of the State Children's Health Program into law, making Texas eligible to cover an [additional 164,000 children](#) by 2012, which would cost the state about \$100 million annually with the federal government contributing about \$300 million annually. Notably, the state's costs could be further reduced by implementing premiums on a sliding scale for those families who earn higher incomes. So, CHIP is once again in the news.

How does Grover's tub affect you? During this session, key votes will come on five critical health issues: funding 12-month continuous eligibility in Medicaid; expansion of CHIP; increasing the number of health professionals practicing in the state; reforming the state school system; and eliminating the interest lists on which some of Texas' most vulnerable citizens—the aging and the disabled—wait for over a decade for services.

What will the choice be? Better health care for thousands of Texans or more time in the tub?

So, what to do? Too few Texans know what has happened in Austin over this past decade; too few know the real state of the state of Texas health care. Pass this story around. Send it to your contact list. Tell the real story.

Let others know. Ask your hometown newspaper to report what choices lie ahead for Texas health care.

Get involved. Find out the facts. Right now, Texas health care is in big tub trouble—and it will take all of us to get her out.

Help us put Texas on the road to better health!

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