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Rural Physician Employment Legislation Signed into Law

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AUSTIN - Gov. Rick Perry signed into law legislation that will have a significant impact on rural healthcare in Texas.

SB 894 authored by Sen. Robert Duncan and Rep. Garnet Coleman allows counties with a population less than 50,000 to directly hire physicians. Hospitals designated as critical access hospitals and a hospital that is the sole medical facility in the community will also have this authority.

"This legislation will help rural hospitals compete for practitioners and give them better opportunities to recruit and retain qualified physicians," Sen. Duncan said. "I am pleased that rural residents, including residents in West Texas, will finally have access to the critical healthcare they need."

Rep. Coleman added, "I'm proud of having worked with Senator Duncan on making this important legislation law," said Rep. Coleman. "This is a major shift in state policy. Doctors will have the choice between hanging up their own shingle or working directly for a hospital."

Sen. Duncan concluded, "I appreciate the hard work of Rep. Coleman and industry stakeholders including the Texas Medical Association, the Texas Hospital Association, and the Texas Association of Rural and Community Hospitals in getting this important piece of legislation passed," Sen. Duncan said. "The House Rural Caucus also played a strong role in the negotiation process and I thank those members for their support."

Sen. Kel Seliger, Sen. Royce West, Sen. Craig Estes, Sen. Carlos Uresti, Rep. Warren Chisum, Rep. Chuck Hopson, Rep. Drew Darby, Rep. Rick Hardcastle, Rep. Dennis Bonnen, Rep. John Frullo, Rep. Jim Landtroop and Rep. Charles Perry co-authored the legislation.

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