

Guest Column: From crisis to calm, Texas health care is on the road to recovery—thanks to Proposition 12

By Dr. John Zerwas and Dr. Richard E. Anderson
Opinion



Dr. John Zerwas is chief medical officer of the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System in Houston. He also is a candidate for Texas state representative District 28.



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HOUSTON – The health care industry in Texas has improved drastically since the passing of Proposition 12, bringing more doctors back to the state, reducing medical malpractice insurance premiums by up to 30 percent and providing patients better access to care.

But the benefits do not need to stop there.

This new landscape must be a call to action for doctors, patients and the companies that support them to continue to improve health care in Texas.

Texas has gone from a state the American Medical Association declared was "in crisis" three years ago to one in which doctors are once again eager to practice. According to the Texas Alliance for Patient Access, Texas already has seen significant gains in physicians, with more than 81 obstetricians, 90 orthopedic surgeons and 260 emergency medicine specialists returning to the state.

And, according to a recent physician survey by The Doctors Company, the nation's largest physician-owned medical malpractice insurer, not only are today's doctors and patients benefiting from the reforms, they are encouraging a new generation of doctors to practice within this improved landscape.

Asked whether they would encourage their children to become physicians despite medical malpractice threats,

about half said they would; by comparison, 80 percent of doctors responding to the same survey in Florida, where the medical malpractice landscape continues to be in crisis, said they would discourage their children from entering medicine because of liability fears.

As the smoke clears from this shift, insurers can take the lead in helping policyholders and their patients secure safer and better health care. The Doctors Company is furthering the cause of patient safety through an aggressive program of education and activism. This consists not only of initiatives for doctors, such as risk evaluation, education and Patient Safety Claims Audits, but also brings patients to action by providing communication and safety tips for patients to help them better navigate the health care system.

For today, Proposition 12 gave thousands of doctors a new or renewed chance to serve their patients in Texas. It is now a state where patients will have access in their own communities to the best and brightest physicians and the highest standards of care.

The next generation of doctors can look forward to a fulfilling career, and parents will recommend a life in medicine for their children with enthusiasm rather than trepidation.

Thanks to these bold steps, the practice of medicine in Texas is in a healthier state.