

FROM THE OFFICE OF
STATE REPRESENTATIVE RUTH JONES MCCLENDON

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

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Representative McClendon Receives Advocacy Award from American Cancer Society

(Austin/San Antonio) At the Texas Pain Summit meeting in Austin, State Representative Ruth Jones McClendon (D-District 120, San Antonio) was honored Monday with the Texas Advocacy Award from the American Cancer Society. The award recognized her for her "outstanding legislative advocacy for the quality of life of cancer patients." Upon receiving the Texas-shaped plaque, Representative McClendon remarked, "This touches my heart; I had no idea my efforts on this legislation would be so honored today. I am truly grateful, and extend my thanks to the American Cancer Society."

Dr. Larry C. Driver, Chair of the Texas Pain Summit and Professor of Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, presented the award to Representative McClendon at a conference held at the Texas Medical Association on September 10. He commended her for advocacy, stating "Unrelieved pain diminishes the quality of life for literally millions of our neighbors, friends, and families. We cannot ignore this crisis in healthcare any longer."

The Texas Pain Summit met to address "The Politics of Pain: Balancing Vigilance and Compassion." In addition to Representative McClendon, other presenters included Dr. June L. Dahl from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Dr. Donald J. Patrick, Executive Director of the Texas Medical Board, and B.C. Lyon from the Narcotics Regulatory Program of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Representative McClendon authored House Bill 574 (H.B. 574), which proposed the creation of a legislative advisory committee on pain medication issues, to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. She explained, "Early last Session, I asked my staff to look into this issue, and soon found that pain is no respecter of persons. We learned that in just this year, more than 11 million Texans will suffer from pain and more than half will not be able to obtain adequate relief. Further study told us that **the vulnerable** in our society – the poor, the elderly, women and children, and members of racial and ethnic minorities, **all of which are part of my District 120 constituency** – are especially at risk for having pain that is undiagnosed and untreated or **under**-treated."

Toward the end of the Session, H.B. 574 became an amendment to Senate Bill 1879, authored by Senator Tommy Williams (R-District 4, The Woodlands) and Representative Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton (R-District 19, Mauriceville). The purpose of the Committee will be to review the current disparities and common elements of the five existing state laws that regulate the distribution of controlled substances; many of those are pain medications that physicians would prescribe for patients who need them. From the perspective of law enforcement, proper measures need to govern the distribution of controlled substances by physicians and pharmacists in a way that does not allow "pill mills," such as those that have been publicized as operating in Texas near the border of Louisiana. Appointments to the Committee are expected to be announced before the end of this month, and the Committee will begin meeting to study the issues and prepare a report for the Legislature by September, 2008, in anticipation of the 81st Legislature which will convene in January, 2009.

Also see .jpg photo attachment.