

We were so excited to kick off the 89th Legislative Session at the Texas Capitol on February 4th with an enthusiastic delegation of physicians, medical students, and TMA Alliance members from Bexar County for the inaugural First Tuesdays at the Capitol event of 2025! Much gratitude to the following participants: John M. Shepherd, MD, BCMS President; Jenny Shepherd, TMAA President; Ezequiel “Zeke” Silva, MD, BCMS Immediate Past President; Jennifer Rushton, MD, BCMS President-Elect; Jayesh Shah, MD, TMA President-Elect; Daniel Deane, MD; Sanjiv Kumar, MD; Kenneth Maverick, MD; Alex McKinlay, MD; Gerardo Ortega, MD; Catherine Ortega; John Michael Austin (UTHSCSA); Ruba Krichati (UIWSOM); and Tirzah Polk (UIWSOM).

Our group met with legislators and staff from each of the Bexar County legislative offices, who graciously made time to discuss important issues and bills that inform access to care, practice viability, and physician autonomy in San Antonio and across the state. Paramount among these are opposition to SB 911 and HB 1756, which would remove physicians from the health care team by giving APRNs full independent diagnostic and prescriptive authority; support of SB 922 and HB 1699, which require patients to be given the results of sensitive diagnostic tests directly from a physician rather than through a portal; clarifying exceptions to Texas’ abortion ban in cases where the life of a pregnant patient is at stake and removing criminal & civil litigation incentives that can deter doctors from providing the standard of care to women and girls in danger; and support of SB 547, which would strengthen the implementation of Texas’s gold card law and cut down on unnecessary, even predatory use of prior authorizations to deny health care access to patients. These issues and many more are at the forefront of the efforts made every day by TMA’s stellar Division of Public Affairs, and we’re glad to have the opportunity to bolster their efforts each month.

If you haven’t made it to First Tuesdays yet this year, there’s still time to get involved! You can register at <https://www.texmed.org/firsttuesdays/> to attend the events on **April 1** (with a special highlight on medical students and residents, though all levels of participant will be present) and **May 6**. Legislators need to hear from you as the session churns on, in order to continuously develop an understanding of how proposed legislation will actually affect the practice of medicine for you, your community, and all Texans. Please come! More information is available at the TMA Web page linked above, but if you have any specific questions, please feel free to reach out to Jacob Hernandez, BCMS Advocacy & Public Health Specialist, at jacob.hernandez@bcms.org.

Captions:

(The numbers are just for ease of matching captions and files – of course, arrange as necessary on the page / let me know if they don't end up all fitting and/or you need a different one of whatever dimensions. Trim/edit the captions as needed, etc.)

1 – Part of our delegation of visitors poses for a photo outside the Texas Capitol North Entrance at lunchtime during the February 4th First Tuesdays event.

2 - Posing for a photo in the fourth-floor rotunda in the Texas Capitol during the Feb. 4th First Tuesdays event: (L – R) Dan Deane, MD; Jayesh Shah, MD; Jacob Hernandez, BCMS staff; Jennifer Rushton, MD; and John Shepherd, MD.

3 – Members of our delegation of visitors pose after a meeting with Sen. Roland Gutierrez (third from R) and Chief of Staff Margaret Frain Wallace (third from L).

4 – During a Feb. 4 meeting with staff from Rep. Ray Lopez's office, Jayesh Shah, MD (right), reflects on scope-of-practice challenges while Legislative Director Christopher Ludiker listens.

5 – Cynthia Van Maanen (left), Chief of Staff for Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer, meets with (L – R) Jayesh Shah, MD; Jennifer Rushton, MD; Daniel Deane, MD; and John Shepherd, MD, on Feb. 4.

6 – Members of our Bexar County delegation pose for a photo in front of the Texas Capitol before the commencement of our February 4th First Tuesdays event.

7 – Sarah Bass (seated, right), Legislative Director for Rep. John Lujan, listens as Dan Deane, MD (seated, left foreground) speaks in a meeting during our February 4th First Tuesdays event.