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## Rep. Smith tackles health care

By Jordan Gass-Poore New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung  
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Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas) spoke privately with Harden Healthcare officials, caregivers and residents Friday about health care issues affecting the state's senior citizens at Sundance Inn Health Center in New Braunfels.

Smith, who also chairs the U.S. Committee on Science, Space and Technology, said he believes Sundance Inn is the "gold standard" for those who need healthcare that may not be able to live at home or in a hospital.

"This kind of facility, it saves lives, it saves dollars and I think it's good to support them and good to have them here," he said at the end of his Sundance Inn tour.

Harden spokesperson Nelda Hunter said Smith's meeting to the facility, which was scheduled a few months ago, did not have a structured agenda. She said instead, it was a way for the company to have a personal conversation with him to discuss healthcare issues that may affect their patients.

Hunter said the discussion with Smith focused on post-acute care reform, which is the transition from hospital to community.

Discussions about this type of care are important to Harden representatives because of a growing age demographic who may need associated services, such as Medicare and Social Security.

"All these people are turning 65, so they're starting to use their services," said Hunter. "We have to ensure that they're still available and also provide really high quality too. So, it's a challenge because there's so much money that is going into these programs and there wasn't any thought that it would ever grow to be that big."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 13.3 percent of the nation's population was 65 years or older.

Smith said some of the most pressing healthcare issues facing Texans as a whole are the high costs and quality of the care.

“One of the things that Congress needs to do is to come up with a way to make sure there’s programs, whether it be Medicaid or primarily Medicare and social security, there for future generations and we’re going to be working on that and we are ongoing working on that,” he said.

Hunter said Sundance Inn has been in the 21st District of Texas since 2008 when it was established. She said it is important for Harden to build a relationship with Smith because of the thousands of patients and employees of theirs that he represents.

“That’s a significant presence and we need his support,” she said. “We want him to be familiar with our facilities.”

Austin-based Harden was founded in 2001 and operates senior care facilities, such as home health, hospice, rehabilitation, among others, in 14 states.

Although Smith said he has not yet been personally affected by home health care facilities, he would be “very pleased” to admit a family member or himself if needed.

Sundance Inn was Smith’s last stop on a small area tour during his brief stay in Texas, which started with meetings at the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce and lunch at the San Marcos Rotary.

He returned to his home in San Antonio before a flight out to D.C. on Monday.

“As busy as I am back home, compared to D.C., I rest when I come back home and the worst day in Texas is better than the best day in D.C.,” Smith said.