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Saturday, August 23, 2008

Tyler

Posted on Friday, August 22, 2008

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Cornyn Lauds Patient-First Focus

By COSHANDRA DILLARD
Staff Writer

Local officials joined U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and administrators with the Texas Spine and Joint Hospital as they expressed their support for specialty, physician-owned hospitals Thursday. Hospital officials welcomed Cornyn as he toured the facility, also taking a few minutes to address his willingness to make health care more assessable to his constituents during his stop in Tyler.

Following a 30-minute tour of exam rooms, medical equipment and even a chat with a couple of patients, Cornyn praised the success of the hospital.

"It is one of the best specialty-type hospitals that I have seen around the state," Cornyn told a small audience of hospital staff and media representatives.

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He also pointed out the need to allow citizens the right to choose where they receive their health care.

"Health care is a high priority on everyone's agenda. The biggest challenge right now is to make health care affordable and assessable to everyone. It's a big challenge, but the goal should be to give people the choice," he said.

Outlining the 25 percent of the American population that does not have health care, two-thirds of which

are unemployed, Cornyn said Congress should take more non-partisan responsibility in health care without actually increasing government control.

He said the government should allow small businesses the same tax code as larger corporations in order to pool their buying power to access more affordable insurance rates.

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Michael Russell, with Azalea Orthopedics, the branch clinic of Tyler Spine and Joint Hospital, said rallying public support is important to the continued success of the hospital.

"It is absolutely important because without support, we would cease to exist," Dr. Russell said. "There are several legislators from our state that do not want to have specialty hospitals and are trying to put an end to physician-owned hospitals. Fortunately, we have people like Sen. Cornyn to say this is a good thing for patients."

Dr. Timothy Beck, also an orthopedic surgeon, said specialty hospitals, such as Tyler Spine and Joint Hospital, are often the targets of criticism, which implies there is a conflict of interest resulting in a lack of patient advocacy. He said he is grateful to supporters like Cornyn who point out the effectiveness of the physician-owned hospital and hopes more people will speak out about their option to choose which hospital they receive care from.

He said the performance of the hospitals in all areas speaks volumes for the need to promote the physician-owned concept.

"Sometimes in the traditional hospitals, hospital administrators pressure physicians

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to make decisions," Dr. Beck said. "We feel our patients come first. They deserve quality care and a choice as to where they get that health care.

"We speak with action by having good patient outcomes, high patient satisfaction and a low infection rate."

According to a National Nosocomial Infection Surveillance report, it shows a national overall average of 3.1 percent for the same types of surgeries performed at Tyler Spine and Joint Hospital. The hospital has kept its surgical site infection rate below 1 percent for the last three years. There were 18 reported infections out of 3,992 surgical procedures performed.

Tyler Mayor Barbara Bass and state Rep. Leo Berman attended the tour, enthused about Cornyn's support. "I'm excited that Sen. Cornyn came to Tyler and that he recognizes what a great facility this is," Bass said. "It is a compliment to our city."

The Texas Spine and Joint Hospital opened in 2003 by a group of physicians with a focus on diseases and injuries of the spine and joints. It is a 20-bed hospital that has received several excellence awards including being ranked among the top 5 percent in the nation (2006-08) and No. 2 in Texas (2008) for spine surgery.

BIBLE VERSE

And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish. -- Psalms 39: 7-8

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