

## *Support Senate Bills 346 and 347 by Senator Jane Nelson*

Immunizations are effective, safe and critical to preventing vaccine-preventable diseases in Texas. ImmTrac, Texas' statewide immunization registry, currently tracks immunization records for children until the age of 18 whose parents have consented for them to be in the registry. The registry is a key tool in helping Texas increase immunization coverage rates among children because it provides timely access to a child's immunization history. No mechanism currently exists to provide the same resource for adults in Texas.

The ability to access immunization information during a natural or man-made disaster is imperative to ensuring a good state of public health. The risk of disease outbreaks increases immediately following a disaster, especially as sewer and water systems are compromised and individuals are forced into close quarters. Texas can currently accept immunization data from other states during a time of disaster but can't reciprocate the information.

SB 346 will enable physicians and other health care providers to track an adult's vaccination history upon the request of a patient. Immunizations are needed throughout adulthood but ensuring a fully immunized population can be challenging because of the state's inability to track adult vaccinations. This is critically important in the event of an emergency, when an adult moves or simply needs access to their immunization record for higher education or travel.

SB 346 also will:

- Require the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to inform individuals at least 30 days before they turn 18 that they may consent in writing to remain in ImmTrac, and
- Allow physicians (and insurers) to submit immunization data to ImmTrac and to monitor their patients' individual immunization status.

SB 347 allows Texas health officials to share immunization information with other health authorities in the event of a declared disaster. Recent disasters requiring the mobilization of volunteer workers throughout Texas highlight the importance of a central registry of child and adult immunizations. SB 347 will:

- Allow ImmTrac to be used by public health officials to release immunization information to a health authority in another state if Texas residents are relocated or evacuated to that state as a result of a disaster,
- Allow immunization information from a health authority of another state to be added to ImmTrac if residents are evacuated or relocated to Texas in response to a disaster, and
- Require DSHS to advise a parent or other guardian of a patient younger than 18 that his or her child's information in ImmTrac may be released to a public health authority during a declared disaster.