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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**TODAY EL PASO COUNTY ATTORNEY WILL ASK THE TEXAS  
LEGISLATURE TO RESTORE MEDICAID AND CHIP SERVICES**

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez will be in Austin, Texas today Wednesday March 28 to testify before a legislative committee to address the lack of access to medical services by low income Texans.

In 2003 the Texas Legislature approved several measures that restricted Texas resident's access to health services covered by the Medicaid and CHIP programs, as means to bridge a \$10 billion shortfall without raising state taxes. Among the most controversial provisions approved by the legislators were the shortened enrollment periods that forced children under the CHIP program to apply every 6 months instead of every year, and the adoption of a new, stricter assets test that easily disqualified thousands of families from receiving health coverage. As a result of these measures adopted by the Texas legislature in 2003, the CHIP enrollment dropped more than 40 % from 500,000 in 2003 to about 290,000 in April 2006. Currently Texas ranks number 1 among states with the highest percentage of the population without health insurance.

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez has been invited to testify before the House Public Health Committee on Wednesday March 28, 2007, as they prepare to discuss several bills aimed to amend the Medicaid and CHIP programs in Texas. Of special importance is House Bill 2863 by State Representative Garnet Coleman (D-Houston), an initiative that would try to expand health services available to low income Texas families.

County Attorney Rodriguez will testify in favor of adopting a 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid applicants; re-establishing the medically needy program to serve pregnant women, children, and caretakers who have high medical expenses; doing away with the waiting period for children who want to enroll in the CHIP program; implementation of a universal coverage health plan for children of low income families; and balance the Medicaid reimbursement rates across Texas regions.

County Attorney José R. Rodríguez explained that restoring health services to low income Texas families should be one of the priorities during the current legislative session.

“Texas is facing a health-care crisis that is threatening the well-being of future generations. That crisis is even more evident in border communities such as El Paso. We need to solve this crisis right now, because we are running out of time. It is inhumane to try to look the other way when there are thousands of parents struggling to raise their kids without access to health care services. The Texas legislature needs to restore Medicaid and CHIP coverage to thousands of families, so that our state gets in the right track,” said County Attorney José R. Rodríguez.

**WHO: El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez**

**WHAT: Testimony before the House Public Health Committee**

**WHEN: Wednesday March 28, 2007 upon adjournment of the House session**

**WHERE: Room E2.036  
State Capitol, Austin TX**

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**To schedule a phone interview with County Attorney José R. Rodríguez, please contact Elhiu Dominguez at 546-2016.**

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