

## Medical residents seek AMA support for unions

*Difficult working conditions, long hours among issues in collective-bargaining debate*

DALLAS (AP) — Medical residents argued Monday for the right to join labor unions, telling an American Medical Association panel of such difficult working conditions as work shifts that last for more than 70 hours.

Residents — doctors who are in their last phase of training — traditionally have been classified as students by labor oversight organizations, making them ineligible to bargain collectively on wages, benefits and work conditions.

The AMA, conducting its biennial House of Delegates meeting in Dallas, is considering a proposed endorsement of collective-bargaining rights for residents. Delegates will vote on the proposition Tuesday.

Critics of the idea of a residents' union said members inevitably would petition for higher pay, leading

to skyrocketing costs for patients.

Rick Wade, American Hospital Association vice president for communication, contended that collective bargaining isn't necessary for residents.

"The bargaining chip will always have to be patient care in any kind of negotiations," Wade said. "That will never be acceptable ... the patients would suffer."

But residents argued that the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education could provide for some collective bargaining if residents renounced the right to strike.

Dr. C. Darren Duvall, chairman of the AMA's resident physician section, told the committee that plenty of hospitals treat residents well, but many need protection.

"No one wants the ability to strike," Duvall said. "We only ask

that institutions (hospitals) can't be allowed to stop the formation of a resident bargaining organization."

The AMA is a parent organization of the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education and could influence how the group votes on a resident union proposition.

"The (AMA) board of trustees would support collective bargaining for all physicians, but we have a long-standing tradition that no physicians should use a strike as a bargaining chip," said board member Dr. William Mahood.

"The residents say they don't want to strike; they just don't want to have to fear retribution if they make their concerns known. We support that," he said.

Mahood said the board was partially persuaded by an anecdote about a residents that was working regular shifts at hospitals while

moonlighting at the same hospital for overtime.

But the resident was assigned eventually to the overtime as part of his education assignment, meaning it was unpaid.

Dr. Tim Reeder, a resident at Ohio State University Hospital, said he has worked 28 consecutive hours and believes collective bargaining would allow for some limits on how residents were treated.

"There should be some guidelines," Reeder said. "Right now, what you have is outright exploitation by some hospitals."

But Wade said that if residents are overworked, that has been "the traditional method for teaching doctors in this country."

"What we're seeing now are residents who are not satisfied with that process. But we support the process as it is."

## LULAC in support of limited voucher bill, director says

AUSTIN (AP) — The League of United Latin American Citizens will work on a bill for the next legislative session to allow the use of public funds to pay private school tuition for certain students, officials with the group said Monday.

The LULAC officials emphasized that the move — the group's first in support of vouchers — isn't meant to diminish public education but to focus on students in low-performing public schools.

"The mentality that everybody had (previously) was that this would hurt the public (schools), but actually it makes them accountable," said Angie Garcia, LULAC state director.

The group's board this weekend in Fort Worth approved a resolution supporting the voucher idea as long as LULAC has input in the legislation, Garcia said.

The vote came after a presentation from Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, who outlined a proposal tied to the public education grant program. That program allows students in low-performing public schools to transfer to other public schools that agree to take them.

Under the proposal, students refused admission to another public school could instead use public funds to attend a private school, Cuellar said.

"If this happens, then that parent is going to have a choice to send them to private schools," Garcia said.

The group wants to have input into the legislation considered in the next regular session in 1999 to ensure public schools wouldn't be hurt, she said.

LULAC board member Gil Gamez said the board also has concerns about such issues as student transportation and would like to see a pro-

vision to get students in schools that improve.

"It's a qualified endorsement of the idea," Gamez said. "We're sure that our concerns are addressed."

The LULAC resolution is a Democratic Party initiative.

"It's a qualified endorsement of the idea. We want to make sure that our concerns are addressed."

GIL GAMEZ  
LULAC BOARD MEMBER

## Ballard announces plans to run for spot on Board of Education

AUSTIN (AP) — Conservative firebrand Donna Ballard, who resigned from the State Board of Education this fall to join her husband in Midland, told The Associated Press yesterday she will seek to regain a board spot.

She is running for the seat now held by Democratic incumbent Rene Nunez.

"In this time in my life, my passion is for education," Ms. Ballard said in a telephone interview. "Basically, what I hope this campaign will be about is offering a positive and hopeful message to the people of District 1. ... If we do it right, we can have our schools performing at our high-

est expectations."

Ballard, a Republican, was elected to the board from The Woodlands in 1994 with the backing of religious conservatives. She resigned effective Oct. 1 to move to Midland because her husband had taken a position there as a church pastor.

When she announced her resignation, Ballard had said she was seriously considering a run for the Legislature as soon as next year and hinted she might challenge Republican Sen. Teel Bivins of Amarillo.

Yesterday, she said she is running again for the education board next year.

"I think she's just fishing for a

position to get back into politics," said Nunez, who is completing his ninth year on the State Board of Education.

"I believe that my constituency — that of the Valley and far West Texas — have supported me in the past, and I believe that they have enjoyed our relationship, which has been one of a lot of contact with members of the education community and business community. ... Hopefully they'll be there again," he said.

While on the board, Ms. Ballard was labeled a leader of a six-member bloc of Republican social conservatives. The other three Republican members of the 15-member

board regularly have voted with the six Democrats.

Raising the hackles of some Republicans and Democrats alike, Ms. Ballard took strong stands on issues including "unwanted federal intrusion" into Texas education; legislative restrictions on the board's power; and a massive school curriculum rewrite, which she termed mediocre and faulted Republican Gov. George W. Bush for supporting.

Ballard said she will be "very comfortable" running in a district with a large Hispanic population.

"Children are children. If you love children and you care about their future, that'll come across," she said.

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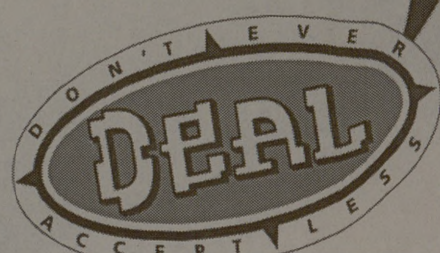


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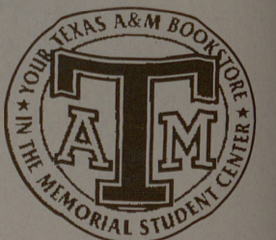
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