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VIP tour of Hope Clinic set

Ellis County Commissioner Heath Sims, pct. 3, will host Senator Kip Averitt, Representative Jim Pitts, and others in a brief tour of Hope Clinic on Wednesday, October 22 at 10 a.m.

"Health care will be a topic that is discussed a great deal in the upcoming session of the Texas Legislature, and specifically indigent health care," Sims said. "Senator Averitt and Representative Pitts are already well aware of Hope Clinic and what it means to this community – but the clinic is growing and making changes, and I think it's a great time for them to come and just take a look at what's going on."

Commissioners voted this week to extend their contract with Hope Clinic to provide primary care, prescriptions, and medical case management to individuals on the County indigent health care program. In addition, the contract was expanded to include basic dental care. With some 300 persons already on the waiting list for dental services at the Clinic, the need for dental services is apparent, and recent grant funding has enabled the Clinic to hire a part time dental provider.

"We've seen a lot of good things come from Hope Clinic over the years," said Sims. "At the County, we're real proud of our partnership with the Clinic, and I'm proud of my church and others that support the Clinic, and I want to challenge other churches and organizations to do a little more as well."

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session, Averitt has already heard testimony regarding indigent health care.

"Hope Clinic is unique and successful," Averitt said. "I am proud it is in Ellis County, but I'm not the least bit surprised."

After serving almost ten years in the Texas House of Representatives, including two terms as Chairman of the House Committee on Financial Institutions, Averitt was elected to the Texas Senate in April of 2002. He is currently Chairman of the powerful Senate Committee on Natural Resources and serves on the Senate's Finance, Business and Commerce, and Education committees, as well as the Subcommittee on Higher Education.

In the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Averitt crafted and passed Senate Bill 3 as part of his ongoing efforts to ensure a clean, adequate, and affordable supply of water for future generations of Texans. Other Averitt legislation that successfully passed included clean air incentives, restoration of cuts made to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and a constitutional amendment that provides permanent property tax relief for senior and disabled Texans.

Pitts was among area leaders involved in the Clinic's start-up some eight years ago and has continued to be interested in its success and its impact on the community as a whole.

Serving as State Representative for District 10 since January of 1993, representing Ellis and Hill Counties, Pitts was Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations and currently serves as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Government Reform. Other committee assignments have included Transportation, Economic Development, State, Federal and International Relations, Ways

and Means, and others. He is a director of Citizens National Bank in Waxahachie, a director of Sims Library, a past president of the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, and past president of the Board of Trustees of Presbyterian Children's Services. Prior to his election to the House of Representatives, Pitts served 14 years on the Board of Trustees for the Waxahachie Independent School District and was president of that Board at the time of his election to the House.

"I'm real glad that the Senator and the Representative are coming to tour Hope Clinic," Sims said. "This Clinic is a win-win kind of a thing, and something that could be reproduced in other areas as part of a real health care solution."