

# LOBBY WATCH



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**On Call:**

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## Teladoc Calls Lawmakers To Redefine House Calls

Sometimes knowing when to intervene can mean the difference between good medicine and malpractice. The nation's top corporate facilitator of phone and Internet medical consultations, New York-based Teladoc, Inc., is betting that now is the time for a Texas surgical strike.

Although Texas pioneered the use of telemedicine consults with its prison population two decades ago, the powerful Texas Medical Association long flexed its muscle in the legislature and courts to block remote medical consultations with non-captive Texans. After more than a dozen telemedicine bills died on the operating table in the 2015 legislative session, Teleadoc made changes. The New York Stock Exchange began [publicly trading](#) its shares that summer, it acquired the tech company Healthiest You, it [formed](#) a political action committee (PAC) and it further ratcheted up its Texas lobby expenditures.

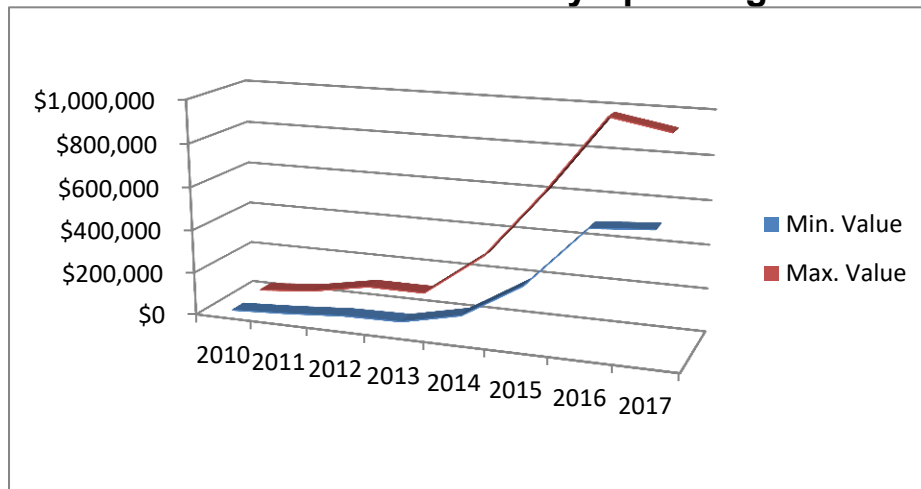
Out-of-state PACs need not file disclosures with the Texas Ethics Committee unless more than 20 percent of their political expenditures in the past 12 months targeted Texas elections. Teladoc's PAC, which started reporting to the Texas Ethics Commission in January 2016, is obsessed with the Lone Star State. It reported that 78 percent of

the \$144,760 that it has spent went to Texas candidates.<sup>1</sup> (Separately, Teladoc made two \$15,000 *corporate* contributions to the Mexican American Legislative Caucus and the House Democrats' Legislative Study Group). This is a significant outlay for a new PAC, though it is dwarfed by the almost \$1.2 million that the powerful Texas Medical Association PAC spent.

Though going up against this doctor trade group is daunting, Texas' Republican leadership hopes that telemedicine could trim the state's huge Medicare costs. The *Houston Chronicle* [reported](#) that Sen. Charles Schwertner negotiated last year with the Texas Medical Association, health insurers and the telemedicine industry. His newly introduced Senate Bill [1107](#) allows patients who have preexisting relationships with Texas-licensed health professionals to receive remote treatment from them. The bill excludes abortion drugs and mental health. It also allows insurers to exclude telemedicine coverage.

Teladoc PAC's first Texas contribution was a \$10,000 doozey to Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick on the last day of 2015.<sup>2</sup> Teladoc has since given Patrick another \$10,000 along with \$10,000 apiece to Gov. Greg Abbott and House Speaker Joe Straus.

## Teladoc's Texas Lobby Spending



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Year	Min. Value of Contracts	Max. Value of Contracts	No. of Contracts
*2017	\$575,000	\$925,000	15
2016	\$555,000	\$975,000	16
2015	\$275,000	\$620,000	13
2014	\$110,000	\$300,000	12
2013	\$50,000	\$100,000	2
2012	\$45,000	\$100,000	3
2011	\$25,000	\$50,000	1
2010	\$10,000	\$25,000	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$1,645,000</b>	<b>\$3,095,000</b>	<b>63</b>

From the 2013 to the 2015 session, Teladoc punched up its Texas lobby spending from a maximum of \$100,000 to up to \$620,000. Last year it spent a maximum of almost \$1 million on 16 lobbyists, figures it is fast approaching—and could surpass—in this legislative year. Teladoc's Healthiest You (HY Holdings) retained two to three Texas lobbyists in recent years led by Dean McWilliams.

## Top Recipients of Teladoc's Medicine

Amount	Recipient
\$20,000	Dan Patrick
\$15,000	Legislative Study Group
\$15,000	Mex. Amer. Legis. Caucus
\$10,000	Greg Abbott
\$10,000	Joe Straus
\$7,500	Van Taylor
\$5,000	Craig Estes
\$5,000	Todd Hunter
\$3,500	Charles Perry
\$3,000	Phil King
\$2,500	Dawn Buckingham
\$2,500	John Zerwas
\$2,500	Jane Nelson
\$2,500	Charles Schwertner
\$2,000	Brandon Creighton
\$2,000	Jodie Laubenberg
\$2,000	Tan Parker
\$2,000	Walter 'Four' Price
\$1,500	Byron Cook
\$1,500	Sarah Davis
\$1,500	Kelly Hancock
\$1,500	Kirk Watson
\$1,500	Whitmire, John
\$1,000	Jason Isaac
\$1,000	Rodney Ellis
\$1,000	Larry Gonzales
\$1,000	Juan Hinojosa
\$1,000	Lois Kolkhorst
\$1,000	Joan Huffman
\$1,000	Royce West
\$1,000	Judith Zaffirini

## Teladoc Lobbyists in Early 2017

Lobbyist	Min. Value of Contracts	Max. Value of Contracts
Denise Davis	\$150,000	\$200,000
Lisa O. Kaufman	\$150,000	\$200,000
Wendy R. Wilson	\$150,000	\$200,000
James Matthew Dow	\$50,000	\$100,000
Allen E. Blakemore	\$25,000	\$50,000
Michael Garcia	\$10,000	\$25,000
Casey Haney	\$10,000	\$25,000
Russell T. Kelley	\$10,000	\$25,000
Carol McGarah	\$10,000	\$25,000
Carrie Simmons	\$10,000	\$25,000
Brittany Heckard	\$0	\$10,000
Jessica Oney	\$0	\$10,000
Reagan, Katy	\$0	\$10,000
Micah Anthony Rodriguez	\$0	\$10,000
Sara Sachde	\$0	\$10,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$575,000</b>	<b>\$925,000</b>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Teladoc PAC spent a total \$138,500 in Texas.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick reported receiving that check three months later.