

# THE CHIROPRACTIC CHOICE

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## ICA Sets its Legislative Goals for the New US Congress

With the significant shift in the national political equation in the United States brought about by the election of Democratic majorities in both the US House and Senate, new opportunities may have opened up for the chiropractic profession in federal legislation. "Under the previous equation, where the White House and both Houses of Congress were in the hands of the same party, room for bargaining was very limited, especially since the Administration's wishes on key issues tended to dominate most if not all legislative outcomes," said Dr. Michael McLean, Co-Chair of the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) Legislative Committee. "In the new Congress we need to act swiftly to identify our goals and mobilize our allies to promote a sound and realistic legislative agenda for the profession," said Dr. McLean.

Acting in response to a detailed analysis of chiropractic's legislative prospects and priorities prepared by the ICA Legislative Committee, ICA's Board of Directors has embraced a series of legislative goals to be promoted in the new session of the US Congress that will convene in January 2007.

Included in the list of goals for the chiropractic profession are initiatives that are designed to be realistic, of practical as well as symbolic value to the profession and worthy of profession-wide support. Those priorities are:

- The introduction and passage by both Houses of Congress of a "Sense of Congress" resolution calling for the implementation of statutory authority already in place to commission doctors of chiropractic as health care officers in the US Armed Forces. Legislation was passed in 1992 to authorize the Secretary of Defense to commission DCs, but that authority has never been implemented.
- The introduction and passage of legislation establishing a permanent chiropractic benefit in the federal TRICARE program for military dependents and retirees.
- The introduction and passage of legislation providing for better access for veterans to chiropractic care, establishing direct access to chiropractic services, without medical referral. Rep. Bob Filner of California had introduced such legislation in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, HR 917, and ICA believes it must remain a key priority in the new Congress.
- The introduction and passage of legislation requiring the US Department of Veterans Affairs to provide chiropractic access at all facilities, based on HR 5202, introduced in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress by Rep. Jeb Bradley and Rep. Bob Filner.
- Passage of legislation that would postpone the cuts in certain provider payments under Medicare, including doctors of chiropractic.
- The introduction and passage of Medicare reform legislation that would require that chiropractic examinations and x-rays be paid for, and that would clearly establish that chiropractic services under Medicare may only be furnished by a doctor of chiropractic. ICA's proposed initiative would fur-



ther establish the unique service of the chiropractic adjustment by amending the law identifying those chiropractic services authorized for reimbursement to read, "...chiropractic adjustment or manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation." The current law only specifies "manual manipulation" which has widely been interpreted as a generic procedure which might be applied by a wide range of providers.

In the new Congress, the chiropractic profession will be facing the traditional battle for scarce federal funds, a struggle complicated by the massive new spending generated by the Medicare prescription drug benefit, revenue deficits and a crushing national debt. ICA is determined, however, to educate policy makers on the stark contrast between the Medicare drug spending issue and the importance of expanding access for all federal beneficiaries to the cost-effective, natural care choice available through chiropractic.

"Doctors of chiropractic must be clear and emphatic in their communications with Congressional representatives on behalf of their patients and the profession," said ICA Legislative Committee Co-Chairman Dr. Michael McLean. "We need to stress that chiropractic, as a drugless, clinically and cost-effective approach to health and healing, can contribute significantly to the solution not only of the Medicare problem, but to other federal programs as well. This can only happen, however, if beneficiaries are not driven away from our care to second-choice, much more expensive medical specialty care, by unsound public policies."

ICA looks forward to continued legislative cooperation with the member organizations of the Chiropractic Coalition and hopes that all organizations in the profession will recognize the need for cooperative action on a reasonable agenda.

ICA also urges every doctor of chiropractic, chiropractic office staff member, chiropractic student, and concerned

patient to be in regular contact with their US Congressional representatives on issues of concern to the profession and to act with determination to promote a sound national health policy, one that takes advantage of the unique and powerful benefits only chiropractic can provide.

"It is vitally important that DCs know their federal legislators, and make a serious effort to educate them on the nature, and especially the safety, drugless aspects and cost-saving potential of chiropractic," said Dr. McLean. "Ideally, DCs should seek to provide opportunities for legislators to experience chiropractic personally as patients, thus equipping them with the best understanding of what chiropractic is all about."

## How to find and contact your Congressman and/or Senator

To assist in identifying your US House of Representatives Member, please go to the link shown below. This is the official site of the US House and they have a Member finder feature that allows you to enter in your zip code, and the name of your House Member will appear. House seats are apportioned according to population and thus the larger states have more Members.

<http://www.house.gov/>

To find your United States Senators, simply go to the site below and enter your state. Each state, regardless of size has two Senators. Their office contact information can be obtained simply by clicking on the links that appear from your state information.

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