

THE CHIROPRACTIC CHOICE

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US Congress Mandates Historic Chiropractic Cost and Readiness Impact Study of Chiropractic in the Military

On September 29, 2006, the US House of Representatives passed the 2007 Defense Appropriations Act for 2007, HR 5122, containing a landmark mandate for the detailed study of the costs of making chiropractic care routinely available to all eligible active duty military personnel, as well as military dependants and retirees. The following day, the US Senate also passed the same bill, which is now public law 109-364.

"This is a tremendous milestone for the chiropractic profession," said ICA Legislative Committee Co-Chairperson Dr. Michael S. McLean, "because it not only calls for a complete costing out of a full implementation for chiropractic benefits for both active duty and TRICARE beneficiaries, it calls for the measurement of offsets to medical expenses saved by the application of chiropractic services. This is the first time in the history of the US government that such a chiropractic study has been directed to address the all-important cost offset issue."

ICA remains firmly committed to military commissions for DCs in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.

In an equally significant and profound step, the legislation also calls for the study of the impact of chiropractic services on the combat readiness status of the US military. "This is a highly significant recognition of the potential contribution the drugless, non-surgical nature of chiropractic can make to military readiness," said Dr. McLean. "In this technological age, highly trained personnel are prohibited from assuming their duties as pilots of sometimes multi-billion dollar aircraft because they are on a painkiller or antihistamine. Likewise, even tank and radar operators are similarly restricted because of the reduced operational and functional capacity drugs can and do cause."

This is an issue that has never been discussed, let alone studied in a chiropractic context, and ICA is confident that the findings will be positive and compelling because of the drugless yet highly effective nature of chiropractic care.

ICA's Legislative Committee aggressively lobbied Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, Virginia Senator John Warner and South Dakota Senator John Thune to keep the chiropractic study mandate in the 2007 appropriations bill. "I am personally pleased that my own Senator Warner came to bat for the profession on this important issue, especially in light of the deletion of a similar provision from the 2006 appropriations act. I am proud to be Senator Warner's constituent," said Dr. McLean.



ICA Legislative Committee Co-Chair Dr. Michael McLean (Virginia Beach, Va.,) with Congresswoman Thelma Drake and Armed Services Committee Chairman, Virginia Senator John Warner.

Because of his unique and historic efforts as Chairman of the US Senate Armed Services Committee, H.R. 5122 has been officially designated the "John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007."

At the present time, chiropractic services are limited to 42 sites in the United States, at which civilian contractors provide care. "I continue to be personally mindful that permanence for chiropractic in the military is best secured through commissioning of DCs," said Dr. McLean. ICA remains firmly committed to military commissions for doctors of chiropractic in all branches of the US Armed Forces. In 1992 ICA successfully lobbied the US Congress for the passage of legislation authorizing the Secretary of Defense to commission DCs as health care officers. That authority remains intact and its implementation remains an important outstanding goal for the chiropractic profession and the highest priority for the ICA.

The specific language of the 2007 defense appropriations bill reads as follows:

SEC. 712. STUDY RELATING TO CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES.

(a) Study Required —

(1) GROUPS COVERED — The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study of providing chiropractic health care services and benefits to the following groups:

- (A) All members of the uniformed services on active duty and entitled to care under section 1074(a) of title 10, United States Code.
- (B) All members described in subparagraph (A) and their eligible dependents, and all members of the Selected Reserves and their eligible dependents.
- (C) All members or former members of the uniformed services who are entitled to retired or retainer pay or equivalent pay and their eligible dependents.

(2) MATTERS EXAMINED —

- (A) For each group listed in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (1), the study shall examine the following with respect to chiropractic health care services and benefits:
 - (i) The cost of providing such services and benefits.
 - (ii) The feasibility of providing such services and benefits.
 - (iii) An assessment of the health care benefits of providing such services and benefits.
 - (iv) An estimate of the potential cost savings of providing such services and benefits in lieu of other medical services.
 - (v) The identification of existing and planned health care infrastructure, including personnel, equipment, and facilities, to accommodate the provision of chiropractic health care services.
- (B) For the members of the group listed in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1), the study shall also examine the effects of providing chiropractic health care services and benefits—
 - (i) on the readiness of such members; and
 - (ii) on the acceleration of the return to duty of such members following an identified injury or other malady that can be appropriately treated with chiropractic health care services.

(3) SPACE AVAILABLE COSTS — The study shall also include a detailed analysis of the projected costs of providing chiropractic health care services on a space available basis in the military treatment facilities currently providing chiropractic care under section 702 of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2001 (as enacted by Public Law 106-398; 10 U.S.C. 1092 note).

(4) ELIGIBLE DEPENDENT DEFINED — In this section, the term 'eligible dependent' has the meaning given that term in section 1076a(k) of title 10, United States Code.

(b) Report Required, Not later than March 31, 2008, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the study required under subsection (a).