

Virginia Delegate John Welch III, DC, up for Re-Election

The Virginia General Assembly is the oldest body of elective legislature in the Americas. When founded in 1619, it was comprised of a council, the governor, and a 22-member House of Burgesses (renamed the House of Delegates in 1775). The assembly met for the first 11 years in the choir of the church at Jamestown. The home of the legislative body changed many times before it settle in Richmond in 1780, with perhaps the most unusual venue being a Jamestown tavern from 1660 to 1665.

The modern Virginia legislature consists of a 40-member Senate, and a 100-member House of Delegates comprised of 51 Republicans, 47 Democrats and one independent member. Among the delegates is John Welch III (R), a 39-year-old doctor of chiropractic/entrepreneur who defeated AP Holmes in a 2000 special election with 61 percent of the vote. He represents the 21st district (part of the city of Virginia Beach). He is a member of the transportation; finance; conservation/natural resources; and labor and commerce committees.

"I was raised in Fall River, MA, south of Boston," he notes, pointing out as a point of interest the town's most infamous resident: one Lizzie Borden. "I decided to come to Virginia, partly due to its natural resources, and that it was largely unserved by chiropractic at the time of my graduation from Parker."

Dr. Welch refers to his time at Parker as "formative" years. "I was blessed to have known Dr. Jim Parker personally, and as class president, was guided by Dr. Neil Stern."

After attending Parker, Dr. Welch joined the Army, and served in the 82nd Airborne Division. He found the experience to be a great training ground. "I was fortunate to have served in elite units that had great leaders and allowed me the opportunity to lead by example."

In 1995, Dr. Welch opened Welch Chiropractic, melding his training from Parker and "the PSTS formula for success."

As a legislator and chiropractor in Virginia, Dr. Welch sees plenty of room for advancing chiropractic in the state. "In less than a decade, we in Virginia have seen workers' compensation coverage eliminated," he observes. "We have lost our campaign to obtain our own board; we have not been funded under Medicaid; yet we have seen physical therapists obtain limited direct access. It's been a trying time for us."

"I have personally challenged statewide organizations in Virginia to create a legislative subcommittee, which I have volunteered to chair. As a result, we are currently working toward one, three, five and 10-year plans that will permit, protect and propel chiropractic."

He adds: "I am in touch with some of the movers and shakers in the profession, and we are rallying multiple DCs for elected/appointed positions to insure the survival of chiropractic. In addition, I'm working with some medical societies in the state to enlist their cooperation."

Some Dr. Welch's greatest influences are the "movers and shakers" who have climbed the local and

state political ladders - from Congressman Ed Schrock; to U.S. Senator George Allen, a great friend of chiropractic; to Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore. "I'm aligning myself with Virginia Chiropractic Association president-elect, Bill Thesier, and Michael McLean, a Virginia resident and ICA member. I call them on every issue in chiropractic."

Within the chiropractic profession, Dr. Welch sees the need for some changes. "We have seen the same five percent of doctors portrayed as leaders and workers, while 95 percent remain silent. I have the utmost admiration for the ACA and the ICA, and any other groups that strive to permit and protect chiropractic. And though I understand the difference in philosophy of each, and their need for independence, it is my contention that we would achieve more united than divided."

The delegate talked about his postelectoral goals: "I would like unity with four to five goals in mind right now. As a profession, nationwide, we contribute massive amounts of money, but this is dispersed like a shotgun blast - it goes all over the place. We need to focus 'laser-like' and elect political candidates that we as a profession will endorse with goals in mind - ensuring equality, direct access, and our role as sole gatekeepers of the adjustment."

"I take my hat off to the leaders in Rhode Island that just okayed the proposal to keep spinal adjustments within the realm of chiropractic by rejecting the proposal that would have expanded scope of practice to include acupuncture there." Dr. Welch said.

"At this time, I am pleading to the profession. My last opponent spent over \$200,000 in an attempt to defeat me. I have support from people on both sides of the aisle, but my first obstacle is, of course, getting re-elected."

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JUNE 2001