

Susan Myshka, DC: Chiropractor Today, Congresswoman Tomorrow?

Editorial Staff

In the past few years, several doctors of chiropractic have attempted to win election to Congress and represent the profession on a national level. Chiropractors and chiropractic advocates from across the country have all campaigned for election with varying degrees of success, but despite their noble efforts, there are still no doctors of chiropractic currently presiding in the Senate or House of Representatives.

This year, Dr. Susan Myshka, a 1984 graduate of Life Chiropractic College, decided to "throw her hat in the ring" and join the political process, running for a seat in the House in Arkansas' first congressional district. In preparation for her final campaign push, *Dynamic Chiropractic* spoke with Dr. Myshka about her run for Congress, the issues most important to her, and how members of the profession can contribute to her campaign's success.

DC: Dr. Myshka, tell us a little about how you became involved in the political process and why you're running for office.

SM: I started noticing that my patients were complaining about taxes being too high and too complicated. Their family farms and family businesses were being driven out of business because of government regulations.

Then we looked at the health care industry. They are systematically dismantling it the same way they did the farming industry. They put the insurance companies in charge of health care rather than the patients, and they have chosen the "powerful" over the people. I decided "no". I want to make sure that we stand up for the people, and we help them get the health care that they need.

DC: Do you feel the politicians aren't doing enough for health care?

SM: The congressman I'm running against is a Democrat. He has not done anything at all. As a matter of fact, there are only two issues he talks about basically - Social Security and prescription drugs. Everything else, he's just oblivious to. He doesn't talk about crime; he doesn't talk about education; he doesn't talk about the things that are important to the local folks.

I think we have the opportunity for the first time in our profession to put a chiropractor in Washington D.C. in Congress. We've never had that opportunity. We've had people who have run, but the difference is, I'm very viable.

The polling numbers show us that the incumbent I'm running against is very vulnerable. His re-elect numbers were only 46%, and if you're an incumbent, that means you're in trouble. As a matter of fact, when the ACA saw the re-elect numbers and they saw how much money I had raised, they got so excited. They said, "Do you realize you're the first chance we've ever had to put one of our guys up there in Washington?"

DC: What issues do you feel most strongly about?

SM: Crime, drugs and education. We've got kids in this district who can't read, write or do arithmetic, and they can't do it because they're in the wrong part of town. They have the wrong economic background. They may have minority status. I don't think that's right. If you're an American and you go to school in Arkansas, you should be able to read, write and do arithmetic when you get out of school.

DC: If you were to be elected, what would be your first goal?

SM: Insurance reform. I do not like what HMOs are doing to our health care system. We didn't have this nightmare until Hilary Clinton tried to pull national health care on us in 1993. It's been a colossal failure, and yet they had the audacity to introduce that stuff. Then they turned around and said, "Oh, we want patient's rights. We want you to have the ability to sue your insurance company." When you're in the middle of a heart attack, you don't turn around and say, "Honey, don't worry. We can sue them."

That's just not the answer. Our courts are already jammed up. They created the nightmare, and then they're pushing it off as if it were some kind of Republican idea. It wasn't. It came straight out of the Democratic party.

DC: Besides managed care, what is your opinion of health care in general in the U.S.?

SM: We have to put the patients back in control of their health care. We've got to take it out of the control of their employers and the insurance companies. Patients and doctors should be making the decisions. Ultimately, the patient should make the decisions.

DC: How would your perspective as a doctor of chiropractic help Congress in making decisions regarding health care policy?

SM: We have a lot of men and women making these decisions who really don't understand the inner workings of a health care office. I have the ability to articulate, persuade and sit down and tell folks what a bill is going to do to the doctor's office if it's passed. If we continue down this road, we're going to have more doctors getting out of the business, and we will end up importing our doctors from foreign countries.

Take Medicare, for instance. The cuts in Medicare have been so severe. A heart surgeon performing a triple bypass is only reimbursed \$1,900 in Arkansas. He can't even pay his overhead. On top of that, if every T isn't crossed and every I isn't dotted, any kind of mistake isn't a mistake, it's called fraud. It's a felony charge. Yet when Medicare makes a mistake, it's a computer glitch.

As a result, we've got doctors who are very skilled who have quit taking Medicare patients. That's wrong to do to our senior citizens, but it's not the doctors' fault. Medicare has driven them into that corner. We've got to do something about Medicare reimbursement; we've got to remove that fraud element.

DC: Why is it so important to have a doctor of chiropractic in Congress?

SM: When you're sitting across from another colleague, as a Congressman, as their peer, I could do a spinal care class. No lobbyist can do a spinal care class like a chiropractor can. I can not only do the class, I can give them an adjustment, and have them under care. We have a chiropractor up at the capitol already, and I think it's marvelous, but we have the ability to have someone who is able to articulate and persuade and bring a benefit. SM: This profession is the most conservative way of treating people. In the arena of high health care costs, chiropractic care ought to be right in the middle as a solution.

DC: You'd be able to give that information on a first-hand basis. You could demonstrate what doctors of chiropractic do. Not every health professional has that ability.

SM: That's exactly right. Even if you have an MD - and we have several MDs in the House, and several in the Senate - a lot of doctors are not intimately involved in the business side of their business, whereas the chiropractor almost always is. We understand the business aspects of it even more than the medical doctors do.

I really see us having committee hearings and holding insurance companies accountable for these denials of claims that are "medically unnecessary." Why not have hearings of people from billing companies, and have them provide testimony about the nightmare of trying to pull money from an insurance company because they have the ability of saying the care's "medically unnecessary." They make doctors and hospitals look like we're evil, greedy people, when in fact the insurance companies are not living up to their contractual agreements with the patients. They don't want to pay the bill. They've got to be reined in.

This is a wonderful opportunity (for the chiropractic profession). If each chiropractor gave me \$100, that'd be six million dollars. That is called "political clout." Now, not all chiropractors are givers, but we have a chance. This is not throwing money into a black hole. The guy's (incumbent Congressman Marion Berry's) re-elect numbers are low. We're putting commercials on. We're holding his record, and I love it, because he talks one way and walks another.

The guy's very, very beatable. It's just a matter of if we're going to be able to raise an additional \$270,000 between now and November. I would love, if it were possible, for the chiropractors to come up with that money. That would be awesome.

DC: I understand the ACA is involved in your campaign.

SM: Yes. They sent a check, and I'm going to be speaking at their convention in September.

We're going to try to raise \$50,000 from chiropractors alone. I've already raised \$153,000. I've got to raise \$270,000 more, and hopefully \$50,000 of that will come from the chiropractic profession.

DC: How can the chiropractic profession get in touch with you and contribute to your campaign?

SM: The biggest thing they can do is send money. If every chiropractor in the nation would send in a dollar, that's \$60,000, but not everybody's going to do that. If just the members of the ACA, or let's just say the ACA delegates - that's 100. If each one of them gave \$100, that would be \$10,000 just from the delegates alone. If each state association kicked in \$1,000, there's \$50,000 right there.

The reason you have to have money is to buy TV time. Our TV spots are very cheap here. We're already running commercials such that we're able to buy nine and 10 dollars per rating point. Forty-seven thousand dollars will buy six different messages that will penetrate my market. If the chiropractic profession raised \$50-\$100,000, they would essentially buy all my TV time.

If you'd like to help, you can contact us by mail or on the Internet. Our mailing address is: Myshka for Congress, P.O. Box 9123, Jonesboro, Arkansas 72403. We also have a web page you can visit ([url=<http://www.myshkacongress.com>]<http://www.myshkacongress.com>[/url]).

DC: Thank you, Dr. Myshka.

