

Orrin Hatch: Presidential Candidate, Chiropractic Advocate

Editorial Staff

According to the nonpartisan political organization Project Vote Smart, over 175 men and women have declared their candidacy for the office of president of the United States for the 2000 election. To put those numbers into perspective, there are more people running for president than there are doctors of chiropractic in Delaware and the District of Columbia combined.

Although the presidential elections are still more than a year away, you might wonder: which candidate would best support the chiropractic profession's interests in the White House?

Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah may have answered that question last month, when he took a few minutes from his busy campaign schedule for an interview with *Dynamic Chiropractic*. Senator Hatch, chairman of the Judiciary Committee and a 23-year veteran of Capitol Hill, became the first major candidate from any political party to endorse chiropractic, saying that he regularly receives chiropractic care and "would stand up for chiropractors" like no other president in history.

Senator Hatch spoke of his efforts in the Senate to increase the availability of chiropractic care to more Americans and to provide more funding for the study of alternative forms of care. He also delivered his opinions on such topics as the ACA's lawsuit against the Health Care Financing Administration, the possibility of chiropractors forming a union, and how his becoming president would impact doctors of chiropractic and chiropractic patients alike, saying that chiropractic "would become much better known" if he were elected.

DC: Senator Hatch, you have historically been in support of chiropractic and alternative health care in general. Could you provide our readers with some background information on this support?

Sen. Hatch: I included an amendment in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 which repealed the Medicare x-ray requirement that placed limitations on chiropractic coverage in the Medicare program. The program itself reflected a discriminatory attitude toward the chiropractic profession. Under the requirement, Medicare beneficiaries seeking chiropractic care must undergo an x-ray procedure performed by a medical doctor regardless of whether the x-ray is clinically justified. The Hatch amendment, which becomes effective in the year 2000, eliminates that requirement, thereby permitting Medicare beneficiaries greater access to chiropractic care without first obtaining a diagnostic x-ray from a regular physician or medical doctor.

I'm also the original co-sponsor of S. Con. Res. 32, which expresses the sense of Congress that every Medicare Plus Choice beneficiary has access to all services covered under the original Part B Medicare program, and that as a covered service, "treatment by means of manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation provided by a doctor of chiropractic is a guaranteed service for beneficiaries under the Medicare Plus Choice plan."

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 created the new Medicare Plus Choice program, wherein

Medicare beneficiaries can enroll in a Medicare managed care plan. The legislation is designed to ensure beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Plus Choice plans that they have access to chiropractic services.

In partnership with Senator Tom Harkin, we created the Office of Alternative Medicine in the 1992 reauthorazitaion bill within the National Institutes of Health. The Office of Alternative Medicine was elevated to a center in 1998. I had a lot to do with that, and its budget has grown from \$2 million in 1993 to \$50 million in 1999.

Our congressional mandate for the center is to "facilitate the evaluation of alternative medical modalities." In fulfilling its mission of conducting and supporting research and training on complementary and alternative medicine, the center is assisted by experts on the 18-member Alternative Medicine Program Advisory Council. We were able to get that done as well.

Some chiropractors will be interested in the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, which I was instrumental in passing, that protects the dietary supplement industry in this country from the FDA's predatory clutches. The FDA would like to make vitamins and minerals, amino acids and herbal products premarket cleared by them: in other words, go through a system somewhat similar to the safety and efficacy process for pharmaceutical drugs. It would run up the costs of vitamins, minerals, amino acids and herbs. We were able to stop that and pass what really is a very good dietary supplement bill. That was a big, hard battle that we were able to get done.

There are a lot of other things. I've been one of the principal spokespeople for chiropractic throughout the country, believing very solidly in the efficacy of chiropractic, and of course I have two sons in law who are chiropractors. (*Editor's note:* Sen. Hatch also has a daughter who worked in the public relations department at Los Angeles College of Chiropractic.)

DC: What has caused you to be such a supporter of chiropractic and alternative forms of health care? Do you have any personal experience with it?

Sen. Hatch: I can remember how I had a skeptical viewpoint of chiropractic. I was a medical liability defense lawyer and defended doctors in medical malpractice cases.

I'll never forget (the time) I had one of the leading orthopedists in the world come in, and I said, "What do you think about chiropractors?" He made sure the door was closed and looked all around to make sure nobody else was in the room, then he whispered to me, "I believe in it." He said, "I actually 'manipulate' under anesthesia, but only under anesthesia. I wouldn't want anybody to know I do that." He knew that spinal adjustments were important.

When I went to Utah, I worshipped in a congregation that had a chiropractor. We were friends, and I'd kid him about his profession, and said I believe in what you do, and it didn't affect me until one day at the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington. I had this big valise with all these filings in it. I got into the cab and flipped it forward in front of me, and my back went out.

I had to fly all the way back to Utah in abject pain. I went to bed that night and couldn't get out of bed the next morning. I had to roll off onto my knees, and I thought, I can't live with this. So I called my friend, the chiropractor in my congregation. He came right over, and within a matter of minutes had me back on my feet.

From that point on, I've been a very solid believer in chiropractic, but I was a believer before because of what that orthopedist had told me. I've been involved in a number of rear-end collisions and have a very touchy back and neck condition. I have to say, I've been to a number of chiropractors who have been greatly helpful and happy to alleviate some of the pain, so I'm a great

believer in chiropractic. I've had many chiropractor friends, and I've had a lot to do with a number of the chiropractic colleges, most notably Palmer and LACC.

DC: In addition to trying to protect and advocate chiropractic, you've also made several efforts to protect Medicare and Social Security. What's your opinion of the ACA's lawsuit against the Health Care Financing Administration regarding Medicare?

Sen. Hatch: I think the ACA should win that lawsuit. The ACA provides quality health care for people that no one else can provide, and it works. They ought to have the same reimbursement as others. That's the issue, isn't it?

Let me say this. I believe there are many instances where chiropractic is the only solution. You can go to doctors the rest of your life, and they won't solve it as quickly as chiropractors will, especially when it comes to spinal adjustments, because the spine is subluxed or out of kilter.

DC: You were also a member of the AFL-CIO for many years. You're no doubt aware of the AMA's recent efforts to unionize. What would your message for the chiropractic profession be regarding unionization?

Sen. Hatch: I think it's up to the profession, but I really think I would caution them about doing that, because it would take away a certain amount of individual freedom. My experience with chiropractors happens to be that they greatly believe in individual freedom and in being free to practice their profession the way they'd like. You'd have to be very careful. I really feel like it would infringe upon the feelings of freedom most chiropractors have and would like to enjoy.

But it's up to them. If that became an economic advantage that chiropractors really wanted to do, of course I'd fight for their rights to be able to do whatever's best.

DC: If you were elected president, what would your role be in impacting health care for Americans, and what type of effect do you think that would have on chiropractors and chiropractic patients?

Sen. Hatch: First of all, for me to be elected president, I'm going to have to raise a lot more funds than I'm raising. Chiropractors all across this country ought to be the first to help.

Assuming I get there, I think the chiropractors will have the best friend in the presidency that they ever dreamed imaginable, and I would stand up for chiropractors like no other president has even tried to. Not only do I believe in chiropractic, but I've been very good to the medical profession as a whole, and have probably passed more important medical health care bills than any other senator, or any other member of Congress currently in Congress.

As president, I would play a very significant and important role in all health care matters. I'd make sure that chiropractors are treated fairly. I'd make sure that alternative medicine forms are not ridiculed and that they are explored to make sure we have the very best methods and techniques that we possibly can to help our people. And of course, I would try to get the government to live within its means with regard to health care and health care delivery services.

We could talk all day on what I would do, but suffice it to say that I'm one who has paid a very extensive price to understand the whole health care system - the whole Medicaid and Medicare system, the pharmaceutical system in this country, and just about everything pertaining to health care - and I have the legislative record to prove it. You wouldn't be getting a novice. You wouldn't be getting somebody who has to learn on the job. I'd know what to do and how to do it, and I can tell you this: chiropractors would not be left out.

DC: What about chiropractic patients? How would they be impacted?

Sen. Hatch: They would be impacted by being able to go to chiropractors, and with chiropractors having a right to be reimbursed. Patients will always benefit from an accentuation of good health care principles, and I think chiropractic would become much better known if Orrin Hatch was president.

First of all, I'd be using it as president, and I'm not shy about telling people that I have used it. I think chiropractic would benefit greatly, there's no question about it. You would have an actual advocate in the White House who isn't afraid to stand up and say yes, I go to chiropractors, and yes, I receive great health benefits from doing so. It'd be the first time.

I hope every chiropractor in this country will support me financially, because if we don't raise the money, it's going to be very difficult to compete. I'm doing OK, but not nearly what I need to do.

DC: If chiropractors are interested in pledging their support, how would they get in touch with you, and where would they send their donations to?

Sen. Hatch: The best way to get in touch would be www.orrinhatch.org or www.orrinhatch.com . You can e-mail me, write to me, and invite me to various conventions where I'd speak. There are a number of chiropractors who can get through to me any time they call. They may not be able to immediately get through, but I'll get back to them.

The chiropractic profession will in my opinion never again have somebody who is considered as knowledgeable about health care, with the legislative record to back it up, who can speak with authority and with respect with the chiropractic profession and get away with it, and I think that's worth the support of every chiropractor in the country. Plus, I have a reputation for being able to bring both sides together back here, something that is sorely needed. I can work with everybody from Ted Kennedy to Tom Daischle in the Senate, and Henry Waxman in the House, and all the Republicans in between.

I think that would be a tremendous advantage to the chiropractic profession. I know it would be. I hope the profession will support me. How many chiropractors are there in the country?

DC: Approximately 65,000.

Sen Hatch: Well, if each of those 65,000 really dug deep and supported me, they alone could elect me. Just think about it. If every one of those chiropractors gave a thousand dollars, that would be more money than George Bush has right now. If every chiropractor gave \$500, you're talking about \$32.5 million. If every chiropractor gave \$100, you'd be talking about \$6.5 million dollars. So they (doctors of chiropractic) can play a tremendous role in electing the strongest advocate for chiropractic outside of the chiropractors themselves in the country.

DC: Thank you for your time, Senator Hatch.

Editor's note: If you would like to give a donation to Senator Hatch's campaign fund, you may send your donation to:

*Hatch for President
P.O. Box 3636
Salt Lake City, UT 84110*

Individuals may send a contribution of up to \$1,000. For more information, or to volunteer your

time to work on Senator Hatch's campaign, visit the senator's web site, call the campaign office at (202) 224-9860 or (877) 428-2420, or send a fax to (801) 994-7991.

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