

## Senator Tom Harkin -- DC's Chiropractic Champion of the Year

Editorial Staff

I have been especially privileged to carry the chiropractic banner for you in Washington, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) told the Iowa Chiropractic Society in a speech this past summer.

And indeed he has carried chiropractic's banner. Senator Harkin has been such an important advocate of chiropractic in the nation's capitol, that this year our traditional "chiropractor of the year" award has metamorphosed into the "Chiropractic Champion of the Year." Senator Harkin is that champion.

Senator Harkin has, among other chiropractic issues, recently zeroed in on two fronts: 1) to have the National Institutes of Health specifically focus on chiropractic research, through the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM), by creating a Center for Chiropractic Health; 2) to get funding for a program for chiropractic research and training.

Both of these objectives were met when President Clinton signed into law on Sept. 30, 1996 the 1997 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act (see Nov. 18, 1996 DC).

The act gave chiropractic:

- nearly \$1 million for continuation of the four-year chiropractic demonstration grants, an increase of \$110,000 from the amount appropriated for 1996.
- more than \$4.1 million for continuation of the "rural health interdisciplinary training program," an improvement of \$445,000 over last year.
- a Center for Chiropractic Research within the National Institutes of Health (Office of Alternative Medicine). The funding for the center is expected to be between \$250,000 and one-half million dollars the first year, the bulk going to chiropractic research grants.

The ACA, the Assoc. of Chiropractic Colleges, and Palmer University were all active in pushing for these measures, and Senator Tom Harkin was our man in Washington.

Who is Tom Harkin? He is a fourth generation Iowan, born in Cumming, Iowa (pop. 151) in 1939. His father was a coal miner who, like so many other miners, was afflicted with black lung disease from years of breathing coal dust. His mother was a Slovenian immigrant who died when Tom was just 10-years-old.

Tom won a Navy ROTC scholarship and used it to earn his degree in government and economics at Iowa State University. From 1962-67, he was a Navy jet pilot, and served three more years in the active Naval Reserves.

In 1970, as a staffer for Iowa Congressman Neal Smith, Harkin accompanied a congressional delegation to South Vietnam. He was responsible for exposing the inhuman conditions that political prisoners were suffering in the "tiger cages" of a South Vietnamese prison at Con Son Island. Harkin released a detailed account of the conditions in those cages, including photographs.

After completing his law degree in 1972, Tom Harkin looked towards politics. In 1974 he defeated the incumbent to win a congressional seat (Iowa's 5th District). In 1984, he again beat an incumbent to win a U.S. Senate seat. In 1990 he won a second term, and a third term this past November.

Senator Harkin believes that chiropractic care is primary health care, and that "Americans shouldn't be forced to go through any so-called 'gatekeeper' to get it." He continues to fight for Medicare coverage for chiropractic x-rays, and has spoken of that concern to Secretary Shalala. "We're getting closer to finally resolving it, and I'm going to keep fighting until this issue is taken care of in a fair manner."

When Senator Harkin spoke to the Iowa Chiropractic Society in July of this year, he presented a modified "top-7" list of how DCs should go about educating members of Congress and other decision makers about their profession. We think that advice is worth wider dissemination:

1. Personalize the issue and share your story.
2. Talk common sense economics. Chiropractic is part of the solution to health care inflation.
3. Don't underestimate the opposition. We are right doesn't mean we will win.
4. Demand answers. Amid all the talk about ending discrimination and promoting fairness in America, why are we still officially sanctioning discrimination against chiropractors in this country?
5. Make sure decision makers know the people, their constituents, are on our side. Every day tens of thousands of consumers decide to spend their own money on chiropractic services, even when other medical treatments are available at a subsidized cost, or at no cost.
6. Enlist support. Get your patients involved. They've got to contact Congress, too. I can't overstate how important that is, and the kind of difference it can make.
7. Make sure they know that you will not go gently into that good night. We're going to keep up the fight for chiropractic care, and we're not going to stop until we reach our goal.

Senator Harkin finished his speech to the Iowa chiropractors with this assertion: "I won't consider the health care battle won until every American can get coverage for chiropractic care, and discrimination against providers is outlawed once and for all."

We think you'll agree that Senator Harkin was a good choice for our chiropractic champion award.

On a personal note, Tom Harkin is married to Ruth, a graduate of the same law school as Tom. She is the president/CEO of the Overseas Private Investment Corp. Tom and Ruth have two daughters, Amy, 20, and Jenny, who turns 15 this December.

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