

Texas Legislation Opens Door to State Funding for Chiro Colleges

Editorial Staff

When Texas Governor Ann Richards signed Senate bill #201 into law back on May 15, 1993, she afforded both state chiropractic colleges (Texas College of Chiropractic and Parker College of Chiropractic) the right to receive state funding. S.B. #201 allows the chiropractic colleges to work with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in the formulation of a program which will provide chiropractic students with the opportunity to receive the same type of financial aid currently available to medical students.

Prior to passage of the bill, TCC and Parker were the only two Texas primary health care colleges excluded from the state's higher education funding (see TCC President S.M. Elliott's article "A President's Quest" in the Sept. 1, 1993 issue of "DC").

The Chronology

Texas state Senator Carl Parker (Dist. 4), who has been working for years to make state funding available to chiropractic students in Texas, authored and introduced S.B. #201 into the state Senate. A hearing on the proposed legislation was scheduled for Wednesday, February 10, 1993.

A delegation of between 175 and 200 people from TCC attended the Senate Education Committee hearing on the bill, including Dr. Elliott, TCC Regent Jim Kite, Dr. Romanuel Washington, and TCC students and faculty. Dr. Elliott and Mr. Kite gave a presentation on behalf of the chiropractic students, and S.B. #201 was placed on the Senate voting agenda.

Dr. Neil Stern, executive vice president of Parker College, approached TCC President Shelby Elliott, DC, and suggested that Parker and TCC join forces to battle for the bill's passage. Dr. Elliott readily agreed to the proposal, and Parker and TCC began developing a unified strategy for the committee hearing (see South Central regional forum stories in May 7 and July 16 issues of "DC").

A letter writing campaign began, and Parker and TCC students were encouraged to mail as many submissions as possible to members of the Texas Senate. The massive effort paid off. On Thursday, February 18, S.B. #201 passed by a vote of 29 to 1. This success necessitated a second letter/lobbying campaign, with an initial avalanche of letters going out to all of the senators thanking them for their support, and another deluge of letters to all 149 members of the state House of Representatives.

The House version of the bill, H.B. #861, was sponsored by Rep. Mike Jackson. The bill appeared before the House Education Committee for consideration on Wednesday, March 10. Drs. Elliott and Stern made their presentations, quoting statistics on topics such as the importance of chiropractic health care, and the ethnic makeup of the student bodies of the two colleges. An enthusiastic crowd of students from TCC and Parker displayed chiropractic solidarity.

The Legislative Committee of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce provided added support to the bill by backing it, and then offering the TCC delegation a forum at a chamber legislative breakfast

on April 13th. Jim Kite, chairman of the TCC Board of Regents Finance Committee Chairman, was actively involved in rallying chamber support as chairman of that legislative committee.

After H.B. #861 emerged from the House Education Committee in amended form, the bill was routed back to the House of Representatives for a vote on April 29th. The House passed the bill by a hefty margin (114-21, 18 reps. not voting or absent), and was reverted to the Senate committee for final approval (because of the amendments made by the House).

Now that the bill is the law of the land in the lone star state, the next challenge is creating a funding program for Texas chiropractic college students.

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