

More Changes at NBCE

REFORM CANDIDATE TED SCOTT, DC, USHERS IN NEW ERA FOR NATIONAL BOARD

Editorial Staff

The weeklong annual meeting of the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE) began on Monday, May 2, 2005, with normal activities - lots of committee and board meetings. The NBCE holds its annual meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards (FCLB), because both organizations are made up of representatives from the chiropractic state licensing boards in North America. But Friday morning's Joseph Janse Lecture brought the first in a series of surprises. e the lecture, so named because it is intended to challenge "the profession to aspire to greatness." David Brown is the current mayor of Charlottesville, Va., rated by Frommer's as the #1 city in the United States in 2004. He is also a former FCLB president and a former NBCE board member.

Dr. Brown's topic: "Doing the right thing, for the right reasons."

After relating his experiences in local politics, Dr. Brown began a very frank discourse on the state of politics within the NBCE. His audience was startled by comments such as:

"But after all this - and this embarrasses me and should embarrass you - after all this, the dirtiest, the most underhanded politics I have ever experienced have occurred here, at the annual FCLB and NBCE meeting.

"I am talking about misinformation, untruths and backroom deal-making that have regularly occurred in our elections, especially national board elections. Why do these elections stray from normal election tactics - making calls, having friends make calls, sending letters, giving speeches - to tactics that are, to me, unethical."

Dr. Brown ultimately asked this question: "Again, why do the best and brightest of our profession - who oversee the ethics of the profession - become so cutthroat at times when it comes to winning a National Board election?"

His explanation for "why" all this was happening mirrored comments overheard among many of the state board delegates: "The way in which students' exam fees [are] supporting excessive spending on the board, especially on travel by the leadership of the board." Dr. Brown noted that back in the year 2000, when he left the board, "The travel budget, not including travel to test sites, was over half a million a year." He postulated, "I have been told that travel by the current leadership of the National Board is as great or greater than it has ever been."

He noted that the NBCE board members were paid "over \$3,000 in per diems alone for this meeting, per member," and encouraged state board representatives to "ask the NBCE leadership what their 1099s from the National Board were this year."

Dr. Brown ultimately contended: "In order for the National Board to become a healthy organization, I believe it must be one where it is a sacrifice rather than a benefit to serve; an organization whose members really think about who is paying the bills - the students, the future of

our profession."

The reactions to Dr. Brown's speech generally fell into two camps. Some were outraged; others felt it was about time someone spoke the truth.

District III Director Vernon Temple, DC, noted: "There is a minority of NBCE board members who are striving for more accountability and transparency in finances in general and travel expenses specifically. We will continue to work in this direction."

But the majority of the NBCE leadership was not forthcoming with the details of how much money is spent for travel, and how their \$500 per diem (including travel days) is being spent. The state representatives were left to wonder why a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation would refuse to make this specific information public. The rumors suggest that the real number is literally hundreds of thousands of dollars greater than Dr. Brown's \$500,000 estimate.

The NBCE board elections were held just a few hours later. There are 11 members of the NBCE board, but only seven are elected members, two of whom are appointed by the FCLB. This means that once a group gains power, it can appoint the four "at-large" members and retain control with only two elected members ... giving them a consistent 6-5 voting advantage.

The only one of the five non-FCLB board positions up for election this year (by the delegates) was that of the district IV director - a position held by Jim Badge, DC, who had served on the NBCE board for 18 years and was also serving as NBCE president. Ted Scott, DC, from Utah, ran against him.

Dr. Scott is a quiet man who ran simply on the basis that reform was needed in the NBCE; he pledged to help bring that reform. As he stated after the election:

"The basic thing that I offered in this campaign is to ensure fiscal responsibility, to try to provide the examinations in a more economical fashion and to improve communications from the state boards and colleges back to the NBCE. I just want to be sure that we have good fiscal responsibility. There have been questions in the past and I would like to see us get more responsible in that area."

Historically, Dr. Scott had little chance. Incumbents were usually able to win their elections, if for no other reason than that they knew most of the voting delegates.

But the second surprise of the day came after the closed caucus voting, when the announcement was made that Dr. Scott had won the district IV director position. And while Dr. Badge gave a very gracious congratulatory speech, one could easily see that he was stunned - as were a number of NBCE board members.

With Dr. Badge no longer a member of the board of directors (and thus no longer eligible to retain the presidency), the board elected Dr. Peter Ferguson to return as NBCE president. Dr. Ferguson returns to the position after serving for one year as board chair (during which time Dr. Badge served as president). The board elected Dr. Frank Hideg as chairman of the board, replacing Dr. Ferguson. Filling out the NBCE Executive Committee are Dr. Rick Murphree, Dr. Kenneth Padgett and Dr. Donna Craft, who were re-elected as vice president, treasurer, and secretary, respectively.

The board also elected Frank Lizzio, DC, to a two-year term as one of the four directors-at-large. Dr. Lizzio is an associate professor at New York Chiropractic College's Chiropractic Health Center in Levittown, N.Y.

The FCLB appointed FCLB President N. Edwin Weathersby, DC, and FCLB Treasurer Daniel Saint-Germain, DC, to serve on the NBCE board. The appointment of Dr. Saint-Germain marks the first time that a non-American citizen has been selected to serve on the board.

But the questions still remain in the minds of many state board representatives:

- How much are NBCE directors spending on travel?
- Is it really true that one director had over \$100,000 on their 1099 form?
- Why won't the board reveal this information?
- Is the NBCE squandering the students' money?
- Were the most recent testing fee increases really necessary?

The mood among many of the state representatives is that of reform - not of the testing process or the organization itself, but of the board of directors. This was made evident by the election of Dr. Scott. This trend is likely to continue until the swirling questions are answered to their satisfaction.

Resources

1. As is the case with each annual Joseph Janse Lecture, Dr. Brown's entire presentation can be found on the FCLB Web site: www.fclb.org/conference2005/reports.htm.
2. *Dynamic Chiropractic* published a number of articles on many of the issues involving the NBCE when they first came to light in 1999. To read any of the following, please visit www.chiroweb.com/archives.
 1. Nat'l Board delegates seek greater authority. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, May 31, 1999.
 2. ICA calls for "immediate, profound reforms" of the NBCE. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Feb. 7, 2000.
 3. ACA weighs in on Nat'l Board debate. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Feb. 21, 2000.
 4. What does the FCLB have to do with the NBCE? *Dynamic Chiropractic*, March 20, 2000.
 5. Chiropractic students weigh in on NBCE controversy. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, April 3, 2000.
 6. NBCE: more questions. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, April 17, 2000.
 7. NBCE bylaws: directors vs. delegates. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, May 1, 2000.
 8. NBCE embraces change. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, May 29, 2000.

JUNE 2005