

An Opportunity for Chiropractic in California

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Chiropractic has an opportunity to clean house. Last year, chiropractic in California was on the defensive. Both houses of the legislature passed a bill (S.B.801) that would have abolished the Chiropractic Act of 1922, a California constitutional act that provides major protections for the profession and accessibility to the public. The author and single promoter of that bill was state Sen. Mark Ridley-Thomas (D). Chiropractic friend Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill.

Now Sen. Ridley-Thomas is gunning for a new job, one even more powerful than his Senate seat. Ridley-Thomas announced he is running for an open seat as a Los Angeles County Supervisor. Each L.A. County supervisor represents more than 2 million people and controls the largest health budget of any county in the United States. The annual budget is almost \$22 billion and involves more than 100,000 employees. Having an enemy of chiropractic in this key and visible position could do damage to the profession for years.

Fortunately, former LAPD Chief Bernard Parks is seeking that same seat. Chief Parks is a lifelong chiropractic patient. Both Parks and Ridley-Thomas survived a primary runoff. The two-man race takes place Nov. 4.

The contrast could not be greater. Ridley-Thomas is busy attacking chiropractic, while Chief Parks believes a key problem in his district is the poor health of too many people. Chief Parks plans on visiting the campus of Cleveland Chiropractic College Los Angeles (CCCLA), seeking allies in his battle to fight obesity, diabetes and malnutrition.

District 2 contains several hundred busy chiropractic offices and the campus of CCCLA. We are part of a grassroots chiropractic movement to engage local chiropractic offices to set up "mini" headquarters to defeat anti-chiropractor Ridley-Thomas and help elect Chief Parks. If we are successful, the power of chiropractic patients will be felt throughout the California political community. If we lose this opportunity, we can expect more attacks in the future.

Recently, a private meeting was held with Chief Parks, chiropractic attorneys Shawn Steel and Mike Schroeder, and several chiropractors including Drs. Jim Dohn (Long Beach), David Pommerenck (southwest L.A.), Chris Braun (Santa Monica) and Arnold Sandlow (L.A.). CCCLA student Niesha Thomas also attended. Chief Parks repeated that his commitment, as stated on his Web site, is to provide quality health care and health guidance for his district's population.

(As an aside, both Shawn Steel and Mike Schroeder are past chairmen of the California State Republican Party. Chief Bernard Parks is a staunch Democrat. For Steel and Schroeder to jump in with this kind of support is a strong reflection of the importance of this campaign. This is an opportunity for all of us.)

Chief Parks' plans include a body of governance with a county-level surgeon general with overseeing responsibility. These far-reaching plans will be looked at all over the world as a model for dealing with urban health and education difficulties. Chiropractic deserves and needs to be at the forefront of this movement. Chief Parks invited chiropractic leaders to help form the body of

governance. He also invited DCs to develop a Health Advisory Council to begin the promotion of healthy lifestyles in the district.

What can a chiropractic office do in a political election? Plenty. Patients trust their chiropractors. The key is to talk to these patients when the stakes are high. We believe most chiropractic offices are respected centers of influence for what is right and healthy. Our chiropractic committee is proposing the following:

- Chiropractors should place posters of Chief Parks inside and outside their clinic and place brochures and biographical information in their reception room.
- Discuss with each patient the importance of this election to the chiropractic profession. Send a letter to past and current patients in the district, alerting them of the importance of the election and inviting former patients to return for an examination.
- The student body at CCCLA should be encouraged to join in active precinct work for Chief Parks. Students, doctors and other interested parties can go to www.parksforsupervisor.com and sign up as a volunteer.

Contact Dr. Dohn at doctordohn@aol.com or Niesha at ndt20@hotmail.com for updates and information on how to get involved in the campaign to elect Chief Parks.

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