

## Health Care Reform Law: "Historic First" and a "Big Win" for Chiropractic, Says ACA

Editorial Staff

The national health care reform bill signed into law Tuesday by President Barack Obama was called a "big win" for the chiropractic profession by the American Chiropractic Association (ACA).

ACA lobbyist Rick Miller said, "What you see in the bill is a recognition that our profession is standing with other professions on a fairly equal basis."

Three parts of the massive, and highly controversial bill, highlighted this newfound recognition at the federal level:

### 1. Provider Non-Discrimination

"We now have a federal law applicable to ERISA plans that makes it against the law for insurance companies to discriminate against doctors of chiropractic and other providers relative to their participation and coverage in health plans. Such discrimination based on a provider's license is inappropriate and now must stop," said ACA President, Rick McMichael, DC, in a formal statement.

"While this does not fully level the playing field for doctors of chiropractic in our health care system, this is a highly significant step that has the potential for positive, long-range impact on the profession and the patients we serve. Congress has finally addressed the issue of provider discrimination based on one's license, and they have said that such discrimination must stop."

The provision in Section 2706 of the law says "A group health plan and a health insurance issuer offering group or individual health insurance coverage shall not discriminate with respect to participation under the plan or coverage against any health care provider who is acting within the scope of that provider's license or certification under applicable State law."

John Falardeau, ACA's Vice President of Government Relations said, "non-discrimination language will be applicable to all health benefit plans both insured and self-insured. National health care reform is designed to eventually cover 30 million currently uninsured Americans. The non-discrimination language will, over time, apply to those individuals as well. However, that number of covered individuals pales in comparison to the 55 percent of workers who are currently covered by self-insured plans that will be affected by the Harkin non-discrimination language. The potential impact in this regard cannot be overstated."

### 2. Community Health Teams

The new law specifically includes DCs as potential members of interdisciplinary community health teams, on equal footing with other health care providers.

These teams are integrated groups "of providers that include primary care providers, specialists, other clinicians, licensed integrative health professionals and community resources to enhance patient care, wellness and lifestyle improvements," according to an ACA statement. McMichael

said, "This language was a critical inclusion to give doctors of chiropractic increased opportunities to be fully engaged as part of the health care team."

### 3. National Health Care Workforce Commission

The law creates a National Health Care Workforce Commission which is charged with analysis and developing projects on the needs of the nation's health care workforce and also specifically includes chiropractors in the definition of health professionals. "In addition, chiropractic colleges are included among the health professional training schools to be studied. The National Health Care Workforce Commission is tasked with providing comprehensive, unbiased information to Congress and the Obama Administration about how to align federal health care workforce resources with national needs," according to the ACA.

McMichael said, "Regardless of how you feel about this legislation and its overall impact on the nation, it has to be recognized as an historic first for the chiropractic profession."

Falardeau called it a "very big win for chiropractors, going forward."

Dr. McMichael noted, "Our partners on the Chiropractic Summit were important team members in securing these critical inclusions for the benefit of our profession and our patients. We thank all team members for their good collaborative work on this major effort and future efforts to come."