

Highlights from the 2012 National Chiropractic Legislative Conference

Hundreds of doctors of chiropractic, students and supporters converged on Washington, D.C., Feb. 15-18 as part of the 2012 National Chiropractic Legislative Conference (NCLC). For the first time, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) was joined by the Chiropractic Summit in hosting the event, marking an historical step forward in unity of voice and purpose for the profession.

The Chiropractic Summit encompasses 41 organizations including ACA, the Association of Chiropractic Colleges, the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations and the International Chiropractors Association, and was created to unite the profession. The Summit held its 16th meeting the day before NCLC.

During the legislative conference, attendees listened to speeches from more than 20 government leaders, received advocacy training and visited their elected officials on Capitol Hill to urge support for pro-chiropractic measures that would provide patients, veterans and active-duty military personnel greater access to the essential services provided by chiropractic physicians.

The meeting's keynote speakers were [Sen. Orrin Hatch](#) (R-Utah) and Howard Wasdin, DC, author of *Seal Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy Seal Sniper*. Sen. Hatch, the ranking Republican on the powerful Senate Finance Committee and a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, talked about DCs' ability to help fill the primary-care work force gap and emphasized chiropractic's efficacy and cost-effectiveness.

"We could save an awful lot of money ... by fully utilizing doctors of chiropractic," said Hatch. "I really believe we can do so much more with preventative care with your help - and people will be so much healthier."

[Dr. Wasdin](#) shared the powerful story that inspired him to become a DC. He was shot three times in Mogadishu, Somalia, during the infamous "Black Hawk Down" mission. "A medical doctor saved my life," said Dr. Wasdin, who was plagued by pain and insomnia after his injuries. "But the services provided by a doctor of chiropractic saved my quality of life."

He went on to talk about the importance of integrated health care teams, the struggles military veterans face as they transition back into civilian life and the necessity of chiropractic care for active-duty military and veterans. "Everybody coming back from over there needs the services provided by doctors of chiropractic," he said. "Carrying a 100 pound rucksack and a helmet for a year is a repetitive stress injury."

NCLC attendees also heard from:

- Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa), member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Veterans' Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and cosponsor of the Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act
- Rima Cohen, counselor to the Secretary for Health Policy, Department of Health and Human Services

- Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.), recipient of the NCLC Lifetime Outstanding Leadership Award for 20 years of steadfast support for doctors of chiropractic and their patients, and especially for his work in expanding chiropractic in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Ret. Brig. Gen. Becky Halstead, spokesperson for the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress

Rep. Filner urged attendees to ask their members of Congress to co-sign the Chiropractic Care to All Veterans Act—legislation he introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to have a chiropractic physician on staff at all major VA medical facilities by 2014. Through previous congressional action, the services provided by doctors of chiropractic are available at 42 VA facilities across the country; however, in the more than 100 major VA medical facilities without a chiropractic physician on staff, the chiropractic care benefit Congress authorized for America's veterans remains virtually nonexistent.

In his address to attendees, ACA President Keith Overland, DC, emphasized the role of DCs as primary care providers and the power that constituents wield on Capitol Hill.

"We are neuromusculoskeletal experts and in fact practically invented the concept of wellness and prevention. Our doctors are fully qualified to help with the primary care shortage in the United States," he said. "But don't just talk to your congressional representatives about it today. Change in Washington, D.C. does not come easy; however, especially in an election year, elected officials will listen to your opinion right in your home town."

The evening before NCLC, the popular congressional reception (sponsored by Standard Process) was well-attended by doctors, students and lawmakers alike. This year's event featured two particularly prominent political figures, Dick Gephardt, former House Majority Leader and president and CEO of Gephardt Government Affairs and Former House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). Both distinguished guests emphasized the need for whole-person care for all Americans and the necessity of filling the primary-care work force gap.

ACA House of Delegates Meeting

Following NCLC, the ACA House of Delegates (HOD) held its annual meeting. The HOD approved important policies supporting ACA's efforts to position DCs as conservative primary care doctors who can help fill the looming primary-care work force gap. Among them:

- "Public Health Concerns Due to Failure to Differentially Diagnose." ACA condemns as a threat to public health the failure by doctors of chiropractic / chiropractic physicians to adequately differentially diagnose and/or to sell treatment packages in the absence of a differential diagnosis. Such practices are contrary to the doctorate level of education inferred by our degree. Furthermore, they are contrary to the universally accepted standards of care and do not represent the customary practices of a member doctor of this organization.

Additionally, panel discussions were held on timely topics for the chiropractic profession as the U.S. debates the transformation of its health care system. Topics included:

- A discussion among nine chiropractic college presidents about the doctor of chiropractic as a primary care provider.
- A discussion about the current state of chiropractic research by some of the profession's most respected researchers.
- A discussion about the need to improve cultural authority for the chiropractic profession held by six of the profession's major organizations.

Source: American Chiropractic Association

