

Politics vs. Doing the Right Thing

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The game of politics is all about negotiating the support needed to win - or at least positioning oneself to look good when you lose. Politics is an occasionally civilized game of cloak-and-dagger in which the goal of winning is often elevated above the interests of the individual constituents.

As discussed last issue [in this space](#) and on the [front page](#),^{1,2} the licensure war in Wisconsin has been going on for the past 10 years. It has involved legal battles, sizable political donations and various legislative initiatives.¹⁻⁶ The war is now apparently coming to an end, with the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association (WCA) agreeing to support legislation that would remove the requirement for a separate practical examination in order to gain a chiropractic license in Wisconsin.⁷

Like all wars, there are innocent civilians casualties. In this case, the "chiropractic casualties" are the graduates who took and failed the Wisconsin licensure exam that will soon no longer be required.

These young people, most of whom grew up in Wisconsin, had dreams of returning to their home state and practicing near their home town. Their losses include the cost of the exam (more than \$1,400 per attempt), the money they didn't earn as a licensed DC, the emotional stress of not being able to support themselves and the stigma of being told they were not good enough to practice chiropractic in Wisconsin.

If they had applied for their Wisconsin license a year or so ago, they wouldn't have had to take the exam. If they had waited and applied a few months from now, they also wouldn't have had to take it. Sadly, they just got caught in the crossfire.

Now that the Wisconsin exam politics are (hopefully) over, what is the "right thing" to do for the DCs who have been put through this unfortunate ordeal? In my book, assuming they've passed the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners' Part III and IV exams with sufficient scores, they should all be given their Wisconsin licenses without further delay. Their paperwork should be expedited, with all parties working together to process these applicants as quickly as possible.

Those 30 or so DCs who just took the April 2013 state exam should also be given their money back. Their test scores don't matter. The same applies to anyone who took the exam last year, but didn't pass it the first time. Why should they be forced to pay for something they didn't have to take?

The above will probably cost some political currency. It may even require Wisconsin board members to give back their \$1,000 per-person, per-exam proctor income.

Giving the exam fees back is a small price to pay given the damage done to these DCs. Moreover, it will help the state of Wisconsin avert a lawsuit that has been brewing for the past year. But the primary reason for giving the exam fees back is that it is without a doubt the right thing to do.

Call me sentimental, but I still believe that deep down inside, people want to do the right thing. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "That old law about 'an eye for an eye' leaves everybody blind. The

time is always right to do the right thing." Here's hoping the Wisconsin board members will see it in their hearts to do the right thing for these DCs.

References

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