

Davis Hammers Chiropractic Again

CALIF. GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL REMOVES CHIROPRACTIC FROM MEDI-CAL

Editorial Staff

On Jan. 10, 2003, scarcely two months after winning re-election, California Governor Gray Davis introduced a budget proposal for the 2003-2004 fiscal year that slashed Medi-Cal expenditures by \$3.6 billion and cut numerous optional benefits provided to Medi-Cal recipients, including the elimination of chiropractic services. The proposal called for a 5-percent reduction in Medi-Cal reimbursements to providers, in addition to a 10-percent reduction proposed by Davis in December.

A total of 18 benefits are scheduled to be cut in Davis' budget, including chiropractic; acupuncture; adult dental services; artificial limbs; hearing aids; hospice care; independent rehabilitation; medical supplies; occupational therapy; optometry; physical therapy; podiatry; and psychology.

An interesting question is why chiropractic services would be cut, especially considering the comparatively small amount of money that would be saved initially by removing it from the budget, and the large expenditures such a cut would eventually create. According to an Associated Press article, eliminating chiropractic would save the state only about \$100,000 per fiscal quarter, compared to approximately \$666,000 per quarter by removing acupuncture and over \$48 million per quarter for adult dental services.¹

Longtime advocates of chiropractic, however, should not be surprised at Governor Davis' actions, considering his previous animosity toward the profession. For the first three-and-a-half years of his tenure as governor, he chose not to appoint anyone to the California Board of Chiropractic Examiners (CBCE), essentially rendering the board defunct for over seven months. Only after *Dynamic Chiropractic* began reporting on the situation did Davis act, and even then, the people he appointed wouldn't necessarily be the first choices to oversee one-sixth of the chiropractic doctors in the country.^{2,3}

Mr. Davis eventually appointed one doctor of chiropractic and one consumer member to the CBCE on March 21, 2002. The consumer member, John Marder, is the managing partner with the law firm of Manning & Marder, Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, LLP. In the past, the firm has worked for Allstate, an insurance company not known for its friendliness toward chiropractors.

The chiropractic appointee, Dr. Ronald Hayes, used to be a member of a state chiropractic association, but is now a member of the California Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

According to the AP, California now faces a budget deficit estimated at up to \$21 billion over the next 18 months.

One is left to wonder which group Governor Davis has ignored more since being elected: California's citizens, or its chiropractors.

References

1. Brice J. Tight budget threatens acupuncture, other Medi-Cal services. Associated Press, December 16, 2002.
2. Demise of the California Board of Chiropractic. *Dynamic Chiropractic* April 8, 2002; 20(8):1,6. www.chiroweb.com/archives/20/08/01.html.
3. California Governor Davis responds to DC article. *Dynamic Chiropractic* April 22, 2002;20(9):43.

FEBRUARY 2003