

Chiropractic Celebrates - Bush Signs VA Bill

Editorial Staff

President Bush finally put pen to paper on the night of Jan. 23 to pass H.R. 3447, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001, a bill that includes a mandate to establish a permanent chiropractic benefit within the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) health care system.

The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) hailed the passage of the bill (now designated as Public Law 107-135) as "an enormous triumph for the profession, but also proof of the powerful role chiropractic plays on Capitol Hill and in the nation's health care system."

"This profession has been fighting to make this law a reality for 65 years," exulted ACA Chairman James Edwards, DC. "It is just tremendous to finally see it happen."

The law authorizes the hiring of doctors of chiropractic in the DVA health system, sets a broad scope of chiropractic practice, and allows the chiropractic profession to oversee the development and implementation of the new benefit through an advisory committee, composed, in part, of chiropractors.

The ACA plans to hold a "VA Forum" on March 6 from 4-5 p.m. at this year's National Chiropractic Legislative Conference, held annually in Washington, D.C. This forum will provide up-to-date information and pertinent details on the new law.

"The passage of this historic law represents an enormous victory for America's veterans, who will now have access to the chiropractic care they have been denied for far too long," said ACA President Daryl Wills, DC. "But this tremendous win is also a sweet victory for the chiropractic profession, because we prevailed after our opponents tried to beat us down at every turn. This legislation survived the attacks of the American Physical Therapy Association, the VA bureaucracy and other medical organizations - and it did so with strong bi-partisan support."

Dr. Edwards gave special recognition to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's efforts to ensure the bill's passage. Strong bi-partisan support also came from House Veterans Committee Chairman Chris Smith (R-NJ); Congressmen Jerry Moran (R-KS), Lane Evans (D-IL) and Bob Filner (D-CA); Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC); and Senator Tim Hutchinson (R-AR). Governor Bob Wise of West Virginia was also instrumental in lobbying for support of the legislation.

Dr. Edwards emphasized the support and efforts of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC), the International Chiropractors Association (ICA), and the World Chiropractic Alliance (WCA) in this victory.

Key provisions of the new law include:

- Immediate phase-in of the program.

- Designation of at least one DVA medical center in each geographic service area of the Veterans Health Administration to provide chiropractic services. The designated sites will be medical centers and clinics located in urban and rural areas.
- Scope of chiropractic services that "shall include a variety of chiropractic care and services for neuromus-culoskeletal conditions, including subluxation complex."
- Dissemination of educational materials on chiropractic to primary care teams "for the purpose of familiarizing such providers with the benefits of chiropractic care and services."
- Establishment of a chiropractic advisory committee that will advise the Secretary on protocols governing referral to doctors of chiropractic, direct access to chiropractic care, scope of chiropractic and other issues.

The chiropractic profession's task now is to ensure that the DVA moves forward to implement the new law.

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