

ACA NEWS
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VA SECRETARY GREEN-LIGHTS CHIROPRACTIC CARE FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS

ACA efforts to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) hires DCs as full time employees and expands access to chiropractic care within the DVA system took a giant leap forward on March 30th, when an official set of policy decisions regarding access to chiropractic care were released by DVA Secretary Anthony Principi. The issuance of Principi's new policy decisions on veterans' access to chiropractic care were a direct result of lobbying efforts spearheaded by the ACA and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) to ensure the passage of legislation mandating the creation of a permanent chiropractic benefit within the DVA and granting the DVA specific statutory authority to hire DCs as full-time employees.

In the past, chiropractic care has only rarely been available within the DVA system, and DCs are not currently employed as full or part-time employees at DVA hospitals. Secretary Principi's new policy decisions, rendered after he received input from a special "chiropractic advisory committee" mandated by Congress, are expected to substantially alter the current landscape by starting the process of hiring DCs to serve on the staff of DVA hospitals and beginning the true integration of chiropractic care into the DVA system.

Key elements of the Secretary's blueprint for chiropractic include:

- DVA's endorsement of the integration of full-scope chiropractic care (under applicable state law) into all missions of the DVA health care system, including patient care, education, research and response to disasters and national emergencies, and DVA facilities across the country.
- DVA's endorsement of a successful and patient-friendly model - essentially based on the operations of Bethesda National Naval Medical Center - of full integration of doctors of chiropractic as partners in health care teams.
- Inclusion of chiropractic care into the VA's funding of research into treatment of service-connected conditions.
- Inclusion of chiropractic colleges and students in training programs at VA facilities.

- Establishment of a goal to ensure continuity of chiropractic care for newly discharged veterans who have been receiving chiropractic care through the Defense Department health care system.

NEW BILL WOULD GIVE VETERANS DIRECT ACCESS TO DOCTORS OF CHIROPRACTIC

On the same day the Secretary's chiropractic policy was announced, the ACA sponsored legislation to provide veterans with direct access to a doctor of chiropractic through the DVA health care system. The bill was introduced by long time chiropractic champion Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA) to ensure unimpeded access to chiropractic care within the DVA.

In the past, segments of the federal bureaucracy have been reluctant to implement directives from Congress regarding chiropractic care. This new bill (HR 4051) seeks to send a message to opponents of chiropractic - inside and outside of the government - that America's veterans will not be denied the chiropractic care they need and deserve.

The "Filner Bill" (HR 4051) seeks to amend Title 38 of the United States Code to permit eligible veterans to receive direct access to chiropractic care at Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics. Section 3 of HR 4051 states that "The Secretary [of Veterans Affairs] shall permit eligible veterans to receive needed [health care] services, rehabilitative services, and preventative health services from a licensed doctor of chiropractic on a direct access basis at the election of the eligible veteran, if such services are within the state scope of practice of such doctor of chiropractic." The measure goes on to directly prohibit discrimination among licensed health care providers by the DVA when determining which services a patient needs.

ACC SUPPORTS THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At its meeting in Las Vegas in March, the Board of Directors of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) voted unanimously to support the recommendations of the VA Chiropractic Advisory Committee. David O'Bryon, executive director of the ACC stated, "The ACC supports the Chiropractic Advisory Committee's recommendations to Secretary Principi, and if the Secretary adopts the recommendations, our veterans will have access to doctors of chiropractic." As reported earlier, the Secretary did indeed accept the majority of the Committee's recommendations and the ACC's support, was without question, pivotal in that happening.

The ACC board is composed of the presidents of the CCE-approved chiropractic colleges in the United States as well as schools in Canada and England. For

further details on ACA's position regarding this matter please visit ACA's Web site at <http://www.acatoday.com/government/va/>.

DOD UPDATE AND FACT SHEET ON PARTICIPATING

It is gratifying to report that there are now 42 military health facilities across America offering much-needed chiropractic care to men and women serving in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. Aside from ensuring that our troops have the chiropractic care they need and deserve, the military chiropractic care benefit Congress authorized has and will continue to create important new opportunities for DCs to provide care through the military's health care system. If you would like to learn more about job opportunities for DCs through military health care or to view a listing of the facilities where chiropractic care is now available to military personnel, please visit a new resource specifically for ACA members on the ACA website:

http://www.acatoday.com/government/dod/military_bases.shtml

Much of the progress made in military health care - the Defense Department has just added 5 facilities to their chiropractic care program - has come not just because the ACA-backed legislation establishing a chiropractic care benefit for America's military was passed in 2000, but because in the years since, pro-chiropractic members of Congress like Senator Jim Talent (R-MO) and Congressman Ed Schrock (R-VA) have kept the pressure on the military medical bureaucracy. The ACA's friends in Congress haven't hesitated to send new orders to the Pentagon when it seemed like the bureaucracy was stalling. In fact, working closely with the ACA and the ACC throughout 2003, Senator Talent and Congressman Schrock, joined by Congressmen Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and John McHugh (R-NY) and Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE), helped secure passage of legislation (Public Law 108-136) directing the Pentagon to move more quickly and more effectively to make chiropractic care available to our troops. The pro-chiropractic provisions of Public Law 108-136 -- available on the ACA website at http://www.acatoday.com/government/medicare/regulatory/passed_signed.shtml -- moved up the target date for full implementation of the chiropractic care benefit by a full year to October 1, 2005, authorized \$6 million in additional funding and put the Pentagon brass on notice that Congress wants to see the Defense Department's Chiropractic Oversight Advisory Committee re-activated.

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