

## ***Chiropractic Profession Converges On Capitol Hill to Oppose S.1955***

***ACA's National Legislative Conference Brings Hundreds to Washington***

(Arlington, VA - March 31, 2006) Doctors of chiropractic from around the country gathered in Washington, D.C., for four days to lobby Congress during the American Chiropractic Association's (ACA) annual National Chiropractic Legislative Conference (NCLC). In a departure from previous legislative conferences, this year's NCLC agenda focused primarily on one issue—a concentrated effort to defeat S.1955, a small business health plan bill that could prove disastrous to chiropractors and their patients.

From March 25-28, more than 500 doctors of chiropractic, chiropractic students and chiropractic supporters converged on the nation's capital to hear speeches from government leaders, to receive advocacy education and training and to urge elected officials to staunchly oppose and defeat S. 1955. Also significant, for the first time in history, all 18 chiropractic colleges were represented by members of their respective Student American Chiropractic Association (SACA) chapters.

"While the ACA has been very active on the legislative front, we are faced with a new and very serious threat in the form of S.1955," said ACA President Richard G. Brassard, DC. "ACA members—including chiropractic students from every college—were heard loud and clear on Capitol Hill this week, but the flurry of grassroots activity must continue long after NCLC. Without our efforts, millions of patients could find themselves without crucial health benefits, including mammograms, prenatal care or chiropractic treatment."

While the newest threat to chiropractic was on the minds of many attendees, several members of Congress and other notable speakers reminded conference attendees of the progress made on other issues important to the profession.

Speakers, including Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee since 1993, commented on the chiropractic profession's commitment to members of the nation's armed forces and veterans. "Of all jobs, people in the military deserve chiropractic," he said, explaining that for too many soldiers the only options available are pain pills or surgery. "Who can deny the men and women in our armed forces access to chiropractic care if they feel it will benefit them?"

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., was also adamant about freedom of choice in the military health care system. Rep. Filner, who has been the pre-eminent House Democrat with regard to chiropractic in the VA, cited statistics that approximately 50 percent of veterans returning from Iraq require musculoskeletal care. "It's so obvious that chiropractic care is needed," he said.

Rear Admiral Adam Robinson Jr., commander, National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), spoke firsthand about the injuries he has seen in returning veterans and the multidisciplinary approach that is needed to treat them. In addition, he commended staff chiropractors at the NNMC for their ability to provide outstanding patient satisfaction and commented that many health care providers try to emulate the chiropractic approach to patient care. "I commend you for giving your customers what they want and what they need," he said.

Speaking on the issue of equity and fairness in Medicare was Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D. "We must insist on no discrimination against any licensed health care provider," she said. Rep. Herseth also discussed the important role chiropractors play in rural areas, such as South Dakota, where often they are the only health care provider available.

Although he was unable to attend in person, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, sent a videotaped message that was played during the NCLC general session. Grassley, a longtime chiropractic supporter and champion of a demonstration project that offers extended chiropractic benefits to Medicare beneficiaries, expressed his concern with reported high rates of documentation errors among chiropractors. "All provider groups have error rates, but chiropractic error rates are sticking out like a sore thumb," he said. "In this climate of limited federal resources this issue can't be ignored."

In addition, several members of Congress addressed the delegation during the NCLC congressional reception, including: Reps. Michael Bilirakis, R-Fla.; Jeb Bradley, R-N.H.; Howard Coble, R-N.C.; Bob Etheridge, D-N.C.; Bob Filner, D-Calif.; J.D. Hayworth, R-Ariz.; and Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga. Dr. Stephen Jones, DHA, principal deputy assistant to the Secretary of Defense, also spoke to NCLC attendees.

