



Ensure Chiropractic Care is Fully Available to All Active Duty Military Personnel

BACKGROUND:

Over a period of several years, dating back to the mid-1990's, the U.S. Congress (*with strong bi-partisan support*) enacted a series of laws, the intention of which, was to improve the health status of active duty military personnel by ensuring that such personnel are provided with access to chiropractic care, provided by doctors of chiropractic.

Doctors of chiropractic (*DCs*) are well-trained, highly-educated health care professionals that specialize in the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders – and Congress undertook the initiative to integrate chiropractic care into the military because it is well recognized that active duty military personnel regularly function in a highly demanding physical environment, in which, injuries to the musculoskeletal system are frequent, commonplace, and oftentimes serious. These injuries not only negatively impact the individual service man or woman affected, but collectively, they serve to significantly degrade the combat readiness and optimal performance of our overall military resources.

Today, as a result of congressional action, doctors of chiropractic now provide care to active duty personnel in all branches of the military, but are currently limited to providing care at only 49 military treatment facilities (*MTFs*) out of approximately 238 MTFs worldwide. Most recently, the FY2009 Defense Authorization Act specifically directed DoD to increase the number of MTFs offering chiropractic care to 60 sites no later than September 30, 2009.

GAO REVEALS MANY SERVICE PERSONNEL STILL DENIED ACCESS TO CHIROPRACTIC CARE:

Despite the excellent chiropractic care being provided to DoD personnel where the benefit is available, a report by the GAO (*GAO-05-890R DOD's Chiropractic Health Care Program, September 2005*), reveals that only about half of all eligible active duty military currently have access to the chiropractic health care that they are entitled to under the law.

In fact, according to the GAO, of the nearly 1.8 million active duty personnel eligible for the chiropractic benefit, nearly 500,000 active duty military are currently living in areas of the United States served by MTFs with no chiropractic clinic or facilities. Additionally, despite the recent history of significant deployment of active duty military in multiple theaters overseas, no MTFs overseas are currently providing chiropractic care. GAO estimates that 246,000 active duty military are living overseas without access to the chiropractic health care services required by law to be provided.

In short, the GAO has found conclusively that DoD has set arbitrary limits on the number of MTFs to provide chiropractic health care services to our active duty military without any legal basis for such limitation; and nearly 750,000 eligible active duty personnel (*worldwide*) are in areas not served by MTFs with chiropractic care facilities.

(over)

DISPARITY ISSUE EVEN MORE CRITICAL WHEN IRAQ DATA EXAMINED:

The important need to provide chiropractic care to all active duty personnel, particularly in overseas locations, is underscored by findings of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Recent VA data (*Analysis of VA Health Care Utilization Among U.S. Global War on Terrorism Veterans, October Jan. 2009*) cite "diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System," back pain, as the **number one ailment** of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans accessing VA treatment.

ACA URGES MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO:

Major deficiencies in the provisioning of DoD health care were widely reported in the media the last several years. The failure of DoD to adequately provide chiropractic care, especially to our troops in the field, is another glaring example of a health delivery system, that unfortunately, all too often continues to shortchange those personnel it is intended serve. It is inconceivable to the American Chiropractic Association, that Congress would allow this deficiency (now so clearly identified by the GAO) to go uncorrected. Accordingly, the ACA urges Members of Congress to:

1. The ACA specifically urges Congress to include provisions in the FY 2010 Defense Authorization Act that would, once and for all, ensure that the Department of Defense moves forward with all deliberate speed to comply fully with the law and make chiropractic health care benefits available to all 1.8 million active duty personnel at each military treatment facility both here in the United States and overseas.
2. As part of the process of fully integrating chiropractic care into the DoD healthcare delivery system, Congress should encourage the DoD to commission DCs as uniformed officers in the military (*Chiropractic care is currently offered only via contract employees*).
3. In addition to the active duty personnel currently eligible, Congress should enact provisions of HR 484, requiring chiropractic care be ultimately made available to all TRICARE beneficiaries. (*Only active duty personnel are currently eligible to receive chiropractic care*) **Contact Rep. Mike Rogers' office at 202-225-3261 and 1) offer to co-sponsor his Chiropractic TRICARE bill, HR 484;** 2) Contact their colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee and urge that the Roger's Chiropractic TRICARE Bill be incorporated into the FY 2010 Defense Authorization Act.
4. Members of Congress who wish to support (*any or all*) of the above policy actions, are requested to provide the Secretary of Defense with a support letter urging such action(s), and to provide the American Chiropractic Association with any support letter(s) generated.

KEY MEMBERS:

**House Armed Services Committee
Senate Armed Services Committee**

For Additional Information Please Contact:

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