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Hasta La Vista, Gray Davis

Arnold Schwarzenegger Wins California Recall Election

By Editorial Staff

By the time you read this, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger - that's right, Governor - and a team of political and economic advisors will be developing a plan designed to lead California out of its economic doldrums. As we go to press (Oct. 8), Schwarzenegger has been elected governor of the world's fifth largest economy, ousting former governor Gray Davis in only the second gubernatorial recall election in U.S. history.^{1,2}

Schwarzenegger finished with approximately 49 percent of the popular vote, easily outdistancing his closest rival, Cruz Bustamante (Davis' lieutenant governor), by nearly 1.2 million votes. In a clear sign of voter dissatisfaction with Davis and the state's Democratic leadership, Schwarzenegger and fellow Republican Tom McClintock garnered more than 61 percent of all votes cast in the election.^{2,3}

Because of the state's convoluted process for certifying the results of an election, Schwarzenegger will not be able to assume the responsibilities of governor immediately.⁴ The process, called a canvass, gives county officials up to 28 days to provide a final count of their ballots. After the canvass, county supervisors have another seven days to approve the totals and send them to the state. The state then gets an additional four days to accept the submissions and certify a statewide result. The entire process takes 39 days to complete, and as a result, Schwarzenegger could officially be sworn in as governor as early as Nov. 16.

For the state's 10,000-plus doctors of chiropractic, Schwarzenegger's election (and Davis' removal) should bring a long-awaited, collective sigh of relief. Schwarzenegger's pro-chiropractic stance is well-known: He is a long-time chiropractic patient; one of his closest friends is Franco Columbu, a fellow bodybuilder and chiropractor; and for years, the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) has held its fitness symposium in conjunction with the Arnold Fitness Classic.⁵

In 1999, Schwarzenegger received an honorary "doctor of humanities" degree from Cleveland Chiropractic College, recognizing his many humanitarian efforts and his support of fitness and health-related endeavors, such as the Inner City Kids program and the Special Olympics.⁶ At the ceremony, Arnold commented on his long-standing belief in chiropractic:

"Let me tell you, there is no better profession than chiropractic. You really helped me. Every day, you are preventing injuries; every day, you are helping people. You let them walk out of your office feeling great about themselves and feeling good in their bodies, relieving pain. I can tell you this from firsthand experience."

"What you do is really powerful."

Davis' relative apathy toward the profession is equally well-known. In his first term, Davis chose not to appoint anyone to the California Board of Chiropractic Examiners (CBCE), essentially rendering the board defunct for more than seven months. During that same time period, he made numerous appointments to other licensing boards, including 13 to the medical board, four to the osteopathic board and two to the physical therapy board.⁷ When he did finally make three appointments, they were done almost immediately following articles published in DC or on ChiroWeb.com criticizing his efforts (or lack thereof).

In his second term, Davis did little to enhance his reputation as an anti-chiropractic governor. His 2003-2004 budget proposal removed chiropractic services from the state's Medi-Cal program.⁸ Thanks to the efforts of several legislators who saw its value, chiropractic was eventually retained as part of the program, allowing more than 600,000 Californians to continue receiving much-needed care.⁹ But that didn't stop Davis. In one of his final acts as governor, Davis signed a workers' compensation package that capped chiropractic care at 24 visits.^{10,11}

The day after Davis signed the legislation, Schwarzenegger criticized the reforms as "really bogus," adding, "Workers' compensation reform is important. As you have just seen, they had reform, but what did it do? It didn't do a thing in order to decrease the cost ... We've got to cut it back down so businesses can stay here and do business here."¹¹ During the recall campaign, Schwarzenegger also promised to call a special legislative session designed specifically to make further reforms to the workers' compensation system.

As a political novice, Gov. Schwarzenegger has many challenges to face, particularly with a new budget due to the state legislature by January 2004. How will he treat chiropractic care? We'll have to wait and see,

although it seems clear he'll be a decidedly better friend to the profession than his predecessor.

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Editor's note: Thanks go to the ICA of California, Dr. Jackie Buettner and the many California doctors and students of chiropractic for their support of Governor Schwarzenegger during his campaign. This is a truly historic time for the chiropractic profession, as we now have a chiropractic advocate as the leader of our state. This clearly demonstrates that by communicating with California's more than 2 million patients, we can make them aware of the important issues and motivate them to join us in acting accordingly.



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