

Dr. Edwards Has Dinner With the Vice President of the United States
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ACA District Governor Dr. James Edwards attended a private dinner with Vice President Al Gore on July 18, 2000 in Kansas City, Missouri. The invitation came as a result of the efforts of Kansas Insurance Commissioner Kathleen Sebelius. Only 27 people attended the formal dinner that was held at the Kansas City Club.

The evening began with a cocktail reception where the Vice President had pictures taken with the attendees. When introduced, Dr. Edwards told the Vice President that he represented the American Chiropractic Association and the chiropractic profession was most grateful for his January, 2000 letter in which he promised as president to work to make sure that chiropractic patients and the chiropractic profession was treated fairly by Medicare.

Vice President Gore was most appreciative and responded that he had a great deal of respect for the chiropractic profession and all we do for the health of Americans. As they positioned themselves for the photo, Mr. Gore said quite loudly, "I want to get a photo with the chiropractor...these folks are great!"

From the cocktail reception, the attendees were escorted into an adjoining banquet room where an elegant dinner was served. Vice President Gore spoke for about 10 minutes at the beginning with members of the press present. When he concluded his remarks, the press left. During the 90 minute dinner, Vice President Gore invited questions.

Although not exact, the following is extremely close to the verbatim exchange that occurred between the Vice President and Dr. Edwards.

EDWARDS: "Mr. Vice President. If I might, I would like to change to subject and discuss health care. As you know, I am a chiropractor and I am here tonight representing the American Chiropractic Association."

GORE: "That's great. You know, maybe I should avail myself of your services and get a treatment tonight." (laughter)

EDWARDS: "Mr. Vice President, I can assure that that can be arranged." (laughter)

GORE: "You know, maybe that's what I need. I sure need to do something to make me appear less stiff and that might be the answer." (loud laughter)

EDWARDS: "Mr. Vice President, on behalf of the chiropractic profession I want to thank the Clinton-Gore administration for all you have done for chiropractic patients. It is most appreciated. However, there is an administration policy that is causing terrible problems for my profession and needs your attention. Although I had hoped to talk to you about it privately, this may be my only opportunity so here goes.

"Currently, the HCFA has a policy in place which severely limits the ability of Medicare beneficiaries to access chiropractic care. Plus, the current HCFA policy, believe it or not, allows non-chiropractors to perform chiropractic services."

GORE: "How could that be? Can you tell me more about it?"

EDWARDS: "Oh, I am so glad you asked. (laughter) Currently, HCFA is allowing non-chiropractors to perform manipulation of the spine. The American Chiropractic Association believes this is contrary to law and after hitting a stonewall with HCFA and HHS, filed a legal action in federal court to correct their unfair policy. This court case is wasting this profession's resources when they could be better utilized on political action.

"Mr. Vice President, the chiropractic profession and our patients need your help. We are asking that you review this matter and help correct the current policy that it in place.

"I have to be candid. My colleagues and I are pretty much single issue voters and there is no issue that is more important to the chiropractic profession than this one. Personally, I believe this matter gives you a unique opportunity to dramatically show what the Gore presidency will be like and gain the support of our member doctors and the millions of patients we serve."

GORE: "You know, the court case bothers me and I am very hesitant to get involved when there is a legal action going on. And although I have never utilized the services of a chiropractor, I have many friends who rave about the benefits they have received from chiropractic care. I appreciate you bringing this to my attention. I want to do some checking and see what I can do."

EDWARDS: "Thank you Mr. Vice President. Your willingness to do that is most appreciated."

At the end of the dinner, the Vice President went around the table and said goodbye to each person in attendance. Dr. Edwards at that time hand delivered a letter to the Vice President that outlined the HCFA problem more in detail. A staff person gave each attendee a beautiful felt lined pewter container with the "Vice President of the United States" seal engraved on the lid.

Dr. Edwards said, "All in all, it could not have gone any better. My sole purpose in attending the event was to inform the Vice President about the HCFA issue and to request his assistance. I am very pleased that the message got delivered. Although it remains to be seen if the Vice President will actually do anything to help the chiropractic profession, he has been made aware of the problem and the ball is now in his court."