



Executive Summary

In 2005, Women In Government, as part of its Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign, released *A Call to Action: The "State" of Cervical Cancer Prevention in America*, a baseline assessment of state efforts to address this issue. This 2006 edition continues to build on that effort by: 1) Summarizing recent measures of cervical cancer prevention activities and legislative efforts; 2) Measuring progress since last year's baseline report; and 3) Providing legislators and public health advocates with recommended actions, tools and resources to help eliminate this preventable disease. This 2006 report measured eight state-wide factors: rates of incidence, mortality, and screening; numbers of uninsured; Medicaid coverage of testing for the human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical cancer; and legislative efforts regarding screening, building task forces or other entities, and other support for cervical cancer prevention. Each factor was scored from 0 to 2 points for a total of 16 possible points. Ratings were assigned to scores as follows: Excellent (14-16), Very Good (11-13), Good (8-10) and Fair (<8).

In 2005 and 2006, no state scored enough points to receive a grade of "Excellent." However, there is good news. Whereas last year there were only four states in the "Very Good" category, this year there were 10. Further, five states received the highest score in the range (12), or 75% (Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina and Rhode Island), compared with only one state in 2005. Common traits among these five states were more insured women, Medicaid coverage for HPV testing in screening, and a strong legislative focus on this issue. Last year, 28 states were in the "Good" category, and this year there were 34 states and the District of Columbia in this grouping. Last year, more than one third of the states (18) and the District of Columbia were in the lowest grade category of "Fair," and this year only six were in the lowest category.

Fourteen (14) states and the District of Columbia raised their grade from "Fair" to "Good:" Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming. More than half (28) of the states retained the same grade. Only two states lowered their grades. West Virginia was graded "Good" last year, and "Fair" this year, due to increased rates of both cervical cancer and uninsured women in the state. California was graded "Good" last year, and "Fair" this year, due to increased rates of cervical cancer and erroneous information in the 2005 report regarding coverage of unrestricted HPV testing.

“ Women In Government's Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign has made this issue a top women's health concern around the country. In Illinois, it has prompted us to re-evaluate how we approach cervical cancer prevention – and has certainly raised the bar on how we define success. We no longer want to reduce cervical cancer rates; we want to eliminate it altogether. ”

Debbie Halvorson
Senate Majority Leader
Illinois



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Overall, three strong messages emerged from this analysis:

1 In one year, a great deal of progress has occurred.

In general, cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates declined; screening rates improved; and across the nation, many state legislative bills and resolutions have been introduced and enacted. Such measures were designed primarily to help ensure that women are educated about HPV and cervical cancer, and to bring the latest data, expertise and technologies to the fight against this preventable disease. Overall, most states significantly improved their scores from 2005, and 20 states and the District of Columbia improved their rating.

2 No state received a score of “Excellent,” showing that more action is needed.

While cervical cancer prevention efforts are strong, women still die needlessly from this disease. In some groups of women, cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates have risen, along with rates of uninsured women. In the near future, more innovations are expected in the cervical cancer prevention and treatment arenas: vaccines are now on the horizon; microbicide research is underway; and new technologies for screening women are being used or are in development around the world. The pace of innovation is accelerating, helping to make cervical cancer elimination a reality; yet many challenges remain. It will take many years for vaccines (or other biotechnologies such as microbicides) to impact cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates, and vaccines currently in development do not target all cancer-causing HPV types.

Effective vaccines for cervical cancer offer the most hope for cervical cancer elimination. However,

while it is important to invest in education and infrastructure to pave the way for the efficient implementation of the vaccine, screening will continue to play a critical role in our efforts to eliminate cervical cancer. More action is needed to ensure that all women have access to the most advanced and appropriate screening and preventive technologies available.

3 Many players in the public health arena must come together to create a comprehensive strategic plan for the future.

Clearly, there are concrete measures that policymakers and other public health advocates can take to further decrease cervical cancer rates. Women In Government recommends:

- Establishing and maintaining a central state-based cervical cancer information and resource center;
- Improving efforts to measure and track the burden of cervical cancer and prevention activities within each state;
- Developing, implementing and evaluating public awareness and educational outreach campaigns for women and providers;
- Developing, implementing and evaluating innovative new healthcare delivery systems to improve access to accurate education, screening and preventive care services for all women; and
- Providing support for all initiatives using targeted media channels.

The 2006 edition of Women In Government's report includes specific recommendations, tools, and case studies to support policymakers and public health advocates in their efforts to implement cervical cancer elimination initiatives. Women In Government calls upon stakeholders in each state to take more action.