

Foreword

Turning Challenges Into Opportunities

A dialogue on HPV and cervical cancer prevention has emerged in state legislatures throughout the country over the last year. While differences in opinion exist about how to best eradicate cervical cancer, the consensus remains that education, prevention, and collaborative efforts are the key to the elimination of this preventable but deadly disease.

Across the country, legislators and public health officials have been successful in turning recent challenges into opportunities by using the increased exposure of the issue to raise the debate to a more informed level. In addition, the past 12 months have seen the enactment of numerous bills to help fight cervical cancer as well as the implementation of cervical cancer prevention programs developed by statewide task forces and new efforts to increase access to HPV screening and vaccines.

Women In Government has been continuing the work of the *Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign* by educating women state legislators on the various ways to prevent this disease, including new preventive technologies such as the HPV vaccine and HPV test, so that they are able to increase knowledge and awareness not only among fellow policymakers but among constituents as well.

As part of the *Campaign's* mission to foster collaborative efforts to develop effective public policy solutions for cervical cancer prevention, we produced our first annual state report in 2005 to track states' prevention efforts. We now proudly offer the fourth edition of this report, **"Turning Challenges Into Opportunities: The 'State' of Cervical Cancer Prevention in America 2008."** This report provides an update on states' achievements in their pursuit of the elimination of cervical cancer.

In general, states continue to receive high grades for their efforts to fight cervical cancer and to make progress in reducing incidence and mortality. Additionally, the 2007 legislative session saw the first concerted efforts to make the HPV vaccine widely available—a challenge that states will continue to grapple with in the coming years. Unfortunately, due to a lack of public education and health insurance coverage, many women continue to be at risk for not receiving the preventive measures necessary to reduce cervical cancer incidence and improve survival rates.

Given these results, we can look to the future with a sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue our important work. Though we may find challenges along the way, we have already seen evidence that barriers can be turned into positive opportunities to help women nationwide protect themselves from cervical cancer. We hope you will find inspiration in this report to continue the fight to eliminate this preventable disease.

Sincerely,



Susan R. Crosby

President

Women In Government



Susan R. Crosby
President