



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

www.akdemocrats.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • January 9, 2003

CONTACT: Jordan Marshall • (907) 465-3842, Toll-free (888) 465-4919, Cell: 321-3682

Fax: 465-5125, Jordan_Marshall@legis.state.ak.us

Democratic Legislators Seek Governor's Support on Breast & Cervical Cancer Bill

Anchorage- Twenty House & Senate Democrats have jointly prefiled a bill today in both legislative chambers to extend a law designed to help women receive breast & cervical cancer screening and treatment. Senator Bettye Davis (D-Anchorage) and Representative Beth Kerttula (D-Juneau) are the prime sponsors. The current program is due to expire June 26 of this year. Democratic lawmakers urged Governor Frank Murkowski to support their bill and end the worry and uncertainty women associate with the current sunset date that would terminate the program.

In 2001, state legislators expanded Medicaid coverage for treatment of uninsured women who have been diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer under the federally financed Center for Disease Control's (CDC) early detection program. In Alaska that could mean some 40 women annually who could not otherwise afford cancer treatment may be able to receive care.

Senator Davis who sponsored an identical bill last year stated, "This is the honorable and compassionate thing to do. With this bill, uninsured Alaskan women can be diagnosed and receive the treatment needed to save their lives."

Senate Minority Leader Johnny Ellis (D-Anchorage) said, "The original bill was needlessly controversial. While the bill had strong bipartisan support in the House, Senate Republicans refused to pass the bill until a provision was included that would fund this cancer treatment through the Medicaid program for only two years. That is unacceptable. As we all know, cancer does not have a two-year time limit."

The CDC program provides grants for screening exams to millions of people who meet eligibility guidelines throughout the country each year, including Alaska. The grantees provide clinical breast exams, pelvic exams, and mammograms. Originally, federal money did not provide for follow-up treatment to any of the uninsured persons diagnosed with cancer -- until the 2001 Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act.

In Alaska, there are currently four CDC grantees providing clinical breast exams, pelvic exams, and mammograms to medically under-served Alaskans meeting the requisite eligibility guidelines. In fiscal year 2001, the CDC grantees diagnosed 24 cases of breast cancer and 105 cases of cervical cancer in Alaska.

Breast cancer is the most-diagnosed cancer in Alaska. One in seven Alaska women will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Uninsured single women making less than \$26,000 per year qualify for coverage.

To enquire about free breast and cervical cancer screening in Anchorage or in your community, call the Anchorage YWCA (907) 274-1572. Alaska residents over 50 who can't afford a mammogram should call (800) 410-MAMM (6266) for information on free checkups.

Moving Alaska Forward • Putting Alaskans First 2003

Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses