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## **President Bush Signs Bill to Provide Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings to Underserved Women**

### **Additional Funding Would Enable the Program, Which Can Serve Only 1 in 5 Eligible Women, to Benefit More Women in Need**

WASHINGTON – April 20, 2007 – President Bush signed critical legislation into law today to expand a successful program that provides lifesaving breast and cervical cancer screenings to low-income, uninsured and underinsured women. Bush’s approval of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program Reauthorization Act of 2007 (S. 624/H.R. 1132), which took place during National Minority Cancer Awareness Week, followed passage in the House and Senate last month with strong bipartisan support.

The legislation, which was introduced in February by Sens. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Reps. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Sue Myrick (R-NC), reauthorizes this program, which is administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), giving some states greater flexibility to reach more eligible women.

Moreover, the law sets increased funding targets for the program from \$202 million currently to \$275 million over the next five years, allowing it to serve an additional 130,000 women. As currently funded, the program can serve only 1 in 5 eligible women. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network<sup>SM</sup> (ACS CAN) will be urging Congress to honor the targets and boost funding for the program.

“Everyone deserves a chance to beat cancer, regardless of their insurance or financial status,” said Daniel E. Smith, president of ACS CAN, which led the lobbying and grassroots effort to pass the bill. “This valuable program provides medically underserved women with access to screenings that catch cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages and save lives.”

The American Cancer Society, ACS CAN's sister charitable organization, has been an outspoken supporter of the program since its inception in 1991. The Society also played a key role in lobbying for companion legislation providing treatment services in 2000 and treatment coverage for American Indian women in 2002. To further demonstrate its support, ACS CAN brought 10,000 cancer advocates, many of whom were beneficiaries of the program, to Washington, D.C. last September to urge lawmakers to make cancer a national priority. During the event, called Celebration on the Hill, more than 340 Members of Congress pledged their support for this program.

In January, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer deaths in the United States decreased between 2003 and 2004 for the second straight year. The number of breast cancer deaths also declined. However, much work remains when it comes to ensuring access to early detection screening for those without adequate health insurance. Only 28.9 percent of uninsured women 40 and over have had a mammogram in the past year.

Established in 1991, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides breast and cervical cancer screenings, follow-up services and information to women most at risk, such as low-income, uninsured and underinsured women. To date, the program has provided more than 6.9 million screening tests to 2.9 million women, detecting more than 29,000 breast cancers, 1,800 cervical cancers and 94,000 pre-cancerous cervical lesions. Additional information about the program can be found at <http://www.acscan.org/makingstrides>.

"Early detection saves lives, but this lifesaving tool is only as good as the access that women have to it," said Laura J. Hilderley, RN, MS, volunteer chair of the ACS CAN board. "That's why ACS CAN will be working with our public health partners to urge Congress to improve access by increasing funding for the program."

The Society estimates that 178,480 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007 and another 40,460 will die from the disease. An estimated 11,150 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year and another 3,670 will die from it.

ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan sister advocacy organization of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major public

health problem through issue campaigns and voter education aimed at lawmakers and candidates to support laws and policies that will help people fight cancer. ACS CAN does not endorse candidates and is not a political action committee (PAC). For more information, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).

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