



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Women's Health Matters

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| ISSUE: **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

We have all heard the expression, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”—and it is quite possibly more true today with advances in diagnostic medicine, than it was when it was coined, perhaps a century ago. While everyone’s health care matters, the fact remains that women have unique health care needs and access to that care is paramount.

For far too long, women, due to their role as primary caregivers to children, parents, spouses, and siblings, sacrificed their own health care to put that of others ahead of themselves. As a result, preventative measures such as screenings and check-ups have often been neglected even by the health care community.

A new study conducted by an independent panel, the US Preventative Services Task Force, has led to much confusion regarding women’s health, in particular women’s breast health. The study suggested that annual screenings for breast cancer utilizing mammography begin at age 50, not age 40, as previously recommended. It is my hope that this confusion doesn’t lead to complacency with regard to women’s health.

It is imperative, especially during this time when health care is being debated at a national level, to ensure that women continue to have their health care needs met by providing the best possible access to screenings in order to prevent catastrophic or fatal results. We do not have to go far back in history to discover that women’s health care needs were not taken as seriously as they are today.

In fact, it was only within the past two decades, policies directed toward the health and well-being of women such as the elimination of “drive through” mastectomies and c-section deliveries were finally enacted. The New York State Women’s Health and Wellness Act of 2002 improved access to preventative health care by requiring health insurance companies to provide coverage for a variety of services needed by women, including mammography, cervical cytology, and bone density screening.

We must continue to make strides, not fall back. See your doctor for annual check-ups! Heed your doctor’s advice!