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Tuesday, May 3, 2005

## Congressional bill 'could strip patients' of cancer screenings

I'm sending an S.O.S. to Congress: Save our screenings! Currently before Congress, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2005 could undo the critical work states have done to ensure coverage for vital cancer screenings and treatments. I urge our members of Congress to oppose this legislation.

The goal is to provide more Americans access to health care by allowing small businesses to offer Association Health Plans (AHPs). But by allowing AHPs to be exempt from state laws requiring coverage for quality cancer prevention, early detection and care, the bill could strip patients of these benefits.

As a woman whose life was likely saved through cancer screening, I believe we should improve our health care system, but not by removing provisions that allow early detection of diseases before they require expensive treatment. By enacting AHP legislation, Congress would undo mammography coverage in 49 states and the District of Columbia and scuttle the growing number of state efforts to guarantee coverage of colon, prostate or cervical cancer screenings. In our state, mammogram screenings and some breast cancer treatments are at risk. In addition, AHPs could raise premiums and increase the number of uninsured Americans.

If AHPs can circumvent state laws enacted to reduce cancer deaths and save lives, what good are we actually doing?

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[^^ Back to top](#)

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