



In Iowa's Interest: Raising Awareness During October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month

by Senator Tom Harkin

If you notice an increased number of pink ribbons, pins or advertisements promoting Breast Cancer Awareness that is because October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In honor of this important month, I would like to remind all Iowans that in addition to showing your support during October, also use this time to take action by getting information about this disease. Do not just notice the pink this year, but rather, talk to your doctor, mother, wife or daughters about prevention, and encourage them to get examined.

My passion for this issue comes from a very personal place: I lost two sisters to breast cancer. Unfortunately for my family, my sisters were diagnosed at a time when regular mammograms and improved treatment methods were not widely available. What gives me hope in combating this disease is that now many women have access to preventive services and medical opportunities. In fact, I was proud to champion historic opportunities in preventive care as part of the Affordable Care Act, the health reform law. That law calls for preventive health services with early detection, like mammograms, without co-pays or deductibles. And this is critical since it is recommended that middle-aged women get mammograms on a regular basis. Those who are younger, who are more susceptible or have a higher increase to breast cancer, should also be screened regularly.

Mammograms are also essential to combating the staggering statistics on breast cancer. According to a Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Study, 230,480 women will develop breast cancer this year alone. Early detection is key to spotting and treating cancer effectively and the new health reform law will ensure more women have the ability to get screenings that may save their lives. And the new law will hopefully transform the health system as we know it.

We must also remember that breast cancer is a disease that affects both sexes and their families and friends. Most Iowans have been affected in some way by cancer and know the trials, hardships, and pain it causes for the person and their families. This month, please encourage your loved ones to get the care and preventative services that can save their lives.

For more information on the Affordable Care Act please visit. <http://www.healthcare.gov/> or <http://harkin.senate.gov/>.