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## SENATE APPROVES MIKULSKI AMENDMENT MAKING WOMEN'S PREVENTIVE CARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

*Mikulski vows to keep fighting for women, include her amendment in final legislation that goes to President*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Senate today passed in a 61 to 39 vote an amendment authored by **U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.)** that guarantees women preventive health care screenings and care at no cost. It is the first amendment to *The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* approved by the Senate.

“Without this amendment, there would be no guarantee that women under 50 would be covered for mammograms, no guarantee of an annual women’s health exam that would include screenings for heart disease, and no guarantee that women would have access to this preventive care at no cost,” **Senator Mikulski** said. “Insurance companies have used every trick in the book to deny coverage to women. This amendment makes sure that the insurance companies must cover the basic preventive care that women need at no cost.”

Currently, more than half of American women report that they delay needed care due to cost. The *Mikulski Amendment* guarantees that women of all ages will receive, at no cost, an annual women’s health exam, which will include screenings for the leading causes of death for women – including breast, cervical, ovarian and lung cancers; heart disease; and chronic illnesses such as diabetes. It also requires all health plans to cover comprehensive women’s preventive care and screenings with no copayments.

“Under my amendment, we are saying good-bye to an era when simply being a woman is treated as a pre-existing condition,” Senator Mikulski said. “We are saying hello to an era where decisions about preventive care and screenings are made by a woman and her doctor – not by an insurance company, Members of Congress, or a stranger – and women are guaranteed preventive screenings and care at no cost.”

Right now, insurance company bureaucrats decide what preventive services will be covered for women. Under the *Mikulski Amendment*, coverage will be based on comprehensive guidelines developed by experts in women’s health and supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control. These guidelines will expand on the limited recommendations of the United States Preventive Services Task Force. They are likely to include coverage of cervical cancer screenings for a broad group of women; annual mammograms for women under 50; pregnancy and postpartum depression screenings; and screenings for domestic violence. These are essential protections for women’s access to preventive health care not currently covered in other prevention sections of *The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*.

“The Senate approved my amendment today, but with votes on the final legislation ahead, the fight’s not over yet,” **Senator Mikulski** said. “Women can count on me to keep fighting for them on the Senate floor and all the way to the White House to end punitive insurance company practices that treat simply being a woman as a pre-existing condition.”

The House health reform bill does not include the *Mikulski Amendment*.

“In order to change our current ‘sick care’ system into a genuine health care system, we must expand access to preventative care in America. But far too many women are increasingly delaying or skipping preventive health care due to costs,” said **Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)**, an original cosponsor of the amendment. “This amendment builds on the wellness efforts in the Senate bill by removing the barriers to healthy living that are unique to women. It requires health plans to cover preventative services and screenings without co-pays and deductibles to provide essential protection. In short, it is just one of the many ways this bill benefits women.”

“For years, we have successfully fought to maintain access to life-saving preventative care, such as annual mammograms,” **Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Ca.)**, an original cosponsor of the amendment, said. “By passing the Mikulski-Harkin-Boxer amendment, we will once again keep annual mammograms and other crucial services available and affordable.”

“This amendment is critical because women’s health is fundamental to our country’s health. It is of utmost importance that we make a real difference in the lives of American women, across their lifespan. Even in Minnesota — where we generally do a good job with health care — there are women in my state right now who are not getting the care they need. The reality is that if my wife or your sister doesn’t have access to preventive services, that’s bad for all of us — bad for our economy, bad for our country and bad for our future,” said **Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.)**, an original co-sponsor of the amendment.

“In the wake of the recent change in breast cancer screening guidelines by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, women all across the country are afraid and confused about whether their access to routine mammograms will be limited,” said **Jennifer Luray**, president of the Komen Advocacy Alliance. “We are also concerned that at a time when one-third of women who qualify for screening today are not being screened due to a lack of access, education or awareness, that this confusion will drive more women away from screening. The Komen Advocacy Alliance is offering its support of Senator Mikulski’s amendment, which will ensure that all women who need and want mammograms will be able to get them.”

Senators cosponsoring the Mikulski Amendment include: **Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Ca.)**, **Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)**, **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.)**, **Senator Chris Dodd (D-Conn.)**, **Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.)**, **Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)**, **Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.)**, **Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.)**, **Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)**, **Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.)**, **Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)**, **Senator Olympia Snowe (R-Maine)**, **Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.)**.

To view video of today’s floor speech by Senator Mikulski, go to:

<http://mikulski.senate.gov/Newsroom/VideoGallery/index.cfm?clip=120309mikulski>.

For an amendment summary, go to: [http://mikulski.senate.gov/\\_pdfs/Press/MikulskiAmendmentSummary.pdf](http://mikulski.senate.gov/_pdfs/Press/MikulskiAmendmentSummary.pdf)

View the *Mikulski Amendment* at: [http://mikulski.senate.gov/\\_pdfs/BAI09N48.pdf](http://mikulski.senate.gov/_pdfs/BAI09N48.pdf).

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