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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Five Thousand Educational Kits to Be Distributed During National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

OKLAHOMA CITY – Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins will begin distribution of thousands of informational packets and bracelets in an effort to assist educating Oklahomans on the easily preventable cancer that strikes women. Lt. Governor Askins will join medical professional and health department officials at the north side of the Center for Healthy Living on Monday, January 14th at 2 p.m.

“The National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) is working to “End Cervical Cancer in our Lifetime,” said Lt. Governor Askins. “The American Cancer Society shows the U.S. death rate from cervical cancer down over the past few years, but the rate of invasive cervical cancer is up.”

In 2008, approximately 160 Oklahoma women are expected to be diagnosed and 60 to die from cervical cancer. Oklahoma currently ranks 12th in the national for cervical cancer deaths.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV) causes nearly all cervical cancer cases and most sexually active adults are likely to become infected at some point in their life. HPV causes no symptoms and usually goes away on its own. However high-risk HPV, which stays in the body a period of years, can cause cervical cancer. The HPV causes cells to change, eventually leading to cancer. Cervical cancer can be prevented or cured by removing the abnormal cells before they become cancerous. A Pap test can detect the abnormal cells. Often, there are no early symptoms so women should have pap tests done regularly, says the National Women’s Health Resource Center.

“By helping people make the connection between the virus and the cancer, there is a real opportunity to end cervical cancer,” said Askins.

The Oklahoma State Health Department is offering free Pap tests to Oklahoma women who qualify. To locate your local county health department and determine eligibility, call 1-888-669-5934 or visit <http://www.health.state.ok.us/phone/Chdphone.html>.