



**Office of Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins**  
State of Oklahoma  
State Capitol, Suite 211  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Kim Roberts  
Office: 405-521-2161  
E-mail: [kim.roberts@ltgov.state.ok.us](mailto:kim.roberts@ltgov.state.ok.us)

**“Pass It On” Campaign Highlights Prevention and Early Detection  
During National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins began distribution of thousands of informational packets and bracelets on Monday in an effort to assist in educating Oklahomans about easily preventable cancer that strikes women.

Askins joined renowned gynecologic oncologist Dr. Joan Walker, Adeline Yerkes of the Oklahoma State Health Department and other health care professionals to discuss the impact of cervical cancer in Oklahoma. This year, approximately 160 Oklahoma women are expected to be diagnosed and 60 to die from cervical cancer.

“Oklahoma currently ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation for cervical cancer deaths. With highly effective prevention and early detection techniques, this doesn’t have to be the case. Through the ‘Pass It On’ Campaign, we hope to help end cervical cancer in our lifetime,” said Askins.

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 are encouraged to have pap tests done regularly.

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

The multi-state campaign, in conjunction with the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA), seeks to raise public awareness during January, which is National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month.

The “Pass It On” bracelets, available from the Oklahoma State Health Departments, is also 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>.