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## **Louisiana Falling Short on Cancer-Fighting Public Policies**

### **Louisiana Lawmakers Have Opportunities to Save Lives and Money**

**Baton Rouge, La. – August 6, 2015** – Louisiana is falling short when it comes to supporting policies and passing legislation to prevent and reduce suffering and death from cancer. According to the latest edition of *How Do You Measure Up?: A Progress Report on State Legislative Activity to Reduce Cancer Incidence and Mortality*, Louisiana measured up to policy recommendations in just one of the nine issue areas ranked. The report was released today by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN).

“We’ve made tremendous progress in the way we diagnose and treat cancer across the country. But to leverage this progress, Louisiana legislators must take advantage of the opportunities to pass evidence-based laws and policies that are proven to save lives and money,” said Amber Stevens, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network volunteer. “In Louisiana alone in 2015, 24,100 people will be diagnosed with cancer and 9,040 will die from it. We can’t wait to take action when the stakes are that high. This report outlines ways lawmakers can make a difference by emphasizing cancer prevention, curbing tobacco use and prioritizing quality of life for patients and their families.”

*How Do You Measure Up?* rates states in nine specific areas of public policy that can help fight cancer, including smoke-free laws, tobacco tax levels, funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs and cessation coverage under Medicaid, funding for cancer screening programs and restricting indoor tanning devices for minors. The report also looks at whether or not a state has said yes to federal funds available to increase access to care through its Medicaid program, has passed policies proven to increase patient quality of life and offers a well-balanced approach to pain medications.

Additionally, the report offers a blueprint for states to effectively implement provisions of the health care law in a way that benefits cancer patients and their families, and discusses the negative financial impact if Louisiana fails to take action on cancer-fighting policy. Passing and implementing the policy recommendations in the report would not only save lives in Louisiana, but also save millions in long-term health care costs and in some cases would even generate additional, much-needed revenue.

A color-coded system classifies how well a state is doing in each issue. Green shows that a state has adopted evidence-based policies and best practices; yellow indicates moderate movement toward the benchmark and red shows where states are falling short.

#### **How Louisiana Measures Up:**

Cigarette Tax Rates	Red
Smoke-free Laws	Yellow
Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program Funding	Red
Medicaid Coverage of Tobacco Cessation Services	Red
Indoor Tanning Device Restrictions	Green
Increased Access to Medicaid	Red
Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Funding	Yellow
Access to Palliative Care	Red

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On January 22, the New Orleans City Council unanimously voted to pass a citywide smoke-free ordinance covering all workplaces and public spaces including bars and casinos. This historic vote and subsequent implementation of the law on April 22, 2015, is a significant victory in the fight against cancer and ensures that no worker in New Orleans will have to choose between their health and their job, and residents and tourists will be protected from the cancer-causing toxins found in secondhand smoke.

The Louisiana legislature recently passed a 50-cent cigarette tax increase, but the public health community is concerned this is too low to see any real public health impact so more work is needed.

“As advocates, we’ve worked hard to educate Louisianans about ways to prevent and treat cancer, but our voice is not enough if state and local policymakers don’t take action to fund and implement state policies and programs that are proven to save lives,” said Stevens.

Nationally, the report finds that only three states meet six out of the nine benchmarks measured. While 25 states and the District of Columbia are making progress in enacting and strengthening policies that fight cancer, unfortunately the remaining 25 states are falling short and no state meets seven or more benchmarks. No state received a green rating in more than six categories measure.

To view the complete report and details on Louisiana’s grades, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).

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