



2021 ALASKA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Cancer is now one of the most preventable and increasingly curable life-threatening diseases - but only if we take the steps necessary to prevent it outright, detect it early, and improve access to care. To this end, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) in Alaska is working on the following policy priorities in support of our mission to end cancer as a major health problem.

Reducing the Toll of Tobacco

- **Tobacco Taxes** – ACS CAN supports local and statewide measures to significantly increase the price of cigarettes and all other tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Such measures are proven effective in significantly reducing the number of youth starting to use tobacco.
- **Tobacco Prevention & Cessation** – ACS CAN supports Alaska’s Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, including work to combat the alarming increase in youth tobacco use, largely driven by e-cigarettes. Results of the Program’s comprehensive and sustained effort are seen in the 29% drop in adult smoking since 1996 and 79% drop in youth smoking since 1995. While high school cigarette smoking fell from 37% in 1995 down to 7.5% in 2019, youth e-cigarette use was up to 26% in 2019. Smoking still costs our state \$575 million in annual health care costs plus an additional \$261 million in annual lost productivity due to tobacco-related deaths.

Expanding Prevention, Treatment, and Survivorship

- **Healthy Eating, Active Living Environments** – Because one-third of all cancer deaths are related to poor diet, physical inactivity, and excess weight, ACS CAN supports Alaska’s Physical Activity & Nutrition Unit and its collaborative effort to prevent childhood obesity and chronic diseases, such as cancer. The program supports partnerships to create communities where it’s easier to be physically active and choose healthy food.
- **Colorectal Cancer Screening Coverage** – ACS CAN supports insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screenings to begin at 45 years of age. Additionally, the retired public employee plan is the only known health insurance plan in the state that is not yet covering screening at all. The last actuarial study commissioned by the State of Alaska showed that adding this coverage for the retiree plan would either be cost saving or cost neutral. When detected early, at the localized stage, colorectal cancer’s survival rate is about 90%, compared to about 15% when found at later, distant stage.

Preserving Access to Comprehensive Coverage

- **Medicaid Access** – ACS CAN supports preservation of access, eligibility, and funding for the Alaska Medicaid program. Having access to comprehensive health insurance coverage increases the likelihood that cancer and other chronic conditions can be found at their earliest stages when treatment can be less costly and health outcomes greatly improved.

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The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is making cancer a top priority for public officials and candidates at the federal, state and local levels. ACS CAN empowers advocates across the country to make their voices heard and influence evidence-based public policy change as well as legislative and regulatory solutions that will reduce the cancer burden. As the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN is critical to the fight for a world without cancer. For more information, visit www.fightcancer.org.