



NEWS RELEASE

JOHN OXENDINE
COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE
SAFETY FIRE COMMISSIONER
INDUSTRIAL LOAN COMMISSIONER
COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Seventh Floor, West Tower
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
www.gainsurance.org

For Immediate Release
December 1, 2009

Contact: Glenn Allen or Wayne Whitaker
404-651-7902
inscomm@oci.ga.gov

OXENDINE DIRECTS INSURERS TO COVER REGULAR MAMMOGRAMS AS DEFINED IN STATE LAW

Atlanta – Insurance Commissioner John W. Oxendine issued a warning letter today to all health insurers operating in Georgia informing them that he will require their policies to continue covering mammogram screenings for breast cancer as currently prescribed by state law.

“I expect insurers to abide by the policy contracts they currently have filed with my office,” Oxendine said. “Some insurers may use these new recommendations as an excuse to reduce the benefits they offer-- this would be totally unacceptable. I would remind each insurer that any coverage change would need to be filed with my office and I will not approve such reductions.”

On November 16, the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, convened by the Department of Health and Human Services, revised existing breast cancer screening recommendations causing concerns among women and doctors across the country. The new recommendations suggest that women should only get mammograms once every two years starting at age 50 instead of annually at age 40.

Georgia law currently states that women age 35 to 39 are entitled to a baseline mammogram; women age 40 to 49 can get a mammogram once every two years or when ordered by their physician, and women 50 and older are to be provided a mammogram every year.

“Early detection is vital to successful treatment,” Oxendine said. “I’m afraid what we see coming from Washington, D.C. is a step down the road to a form of health care rationing that puts financial considerations over an individual’s health. Waiting to the last minute to treat an illness is wrong. That’s why I expect health insurers to continue supporting early and regular mammograms as defined in state law.”

###