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April 26, 2010

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**NC Women United Looks Back at 2009 Session and Calls for 2010
Action on Family-Friendly Workplaces, Voter-Owned Elections**

*Report Card indicates that much progress made in areas of equality and access to
healthcare; still work to be done assist women in today's economy*

Raleigh-- North Carolina Women United today released the results of their 2009 Legislative Report Card, an assessment of progress made on the 2009 Women's Agenda. NC Women United members--a coalition of organizations and individuals working to achieve the full political, social, and economic equality of all women across North Carolina--gathered with legislators to celebrate victories but also call for 2010 action on the pending items on the Women's Agenda.

Of the 16 policy bills and appropriations items that NCWU supported, 8 passed, 2 failed and 6 are pending for the 2010 short legislative session.

"Despite grappling with a severe budget shortfall, lawmakers have passed some strong progressive legislation over the last year that will significantly impact women and girls' access to health care and women's equality," began Alison Kiser, President of NC Women United. "But today we're here to remind the NC General Assembly that their work is not done. Women across North Carolina particularly need and deserve action to promote family-friendly workplaces and knock down the barriers facing women entering public office."

The President of NC Women United was joined by members of the N.C. General Assembly, including Representatives Jean Farmer-Butterfield (D-Wilson), Susan Fisher (D-Buncombe), Verla Insko (D-Orange), Grier Martin (D-Wake), Deborah Ross (D-Wake), and Jennifer Weiss (D-Wake), and Senator Ellie Kinnaird (D-Orange). State lawmakers reviewed the good and the bad from the Report Card, which evaluates legislation pertaining to access to health care, civic participation and equality, economic self-sufficiency, and violence against women.

One item of unfinished business on the 2009 Women's Agenda is the Healthy Families and Healthy Workplaces Act (HB 177/SB 534), which would guarantee all workers a minimum number of paid sick days to care for themselves or a sick family member. Bills that would expand Voter-Owned Elections among both the Council of State offices (HB 586/SB 966) and authorize local-level publicly financed campaigns (HB 120) are also still pending.

"With public confidence in government at such low levels, elected officials in North Carolina have a responsibility and an opportunity to show voters that we are serious

about reform,” said Rep. Jennifer Weiss. “At the heart of any reform effort should be expanding voluntary Voter Owned Elections programs that give candidates a viable alternative to the private money chase and give voters more confidence that their elected officials are really working for them.”

Victories from the 2009 legislative session include the passage of the Healthy Youth Act and the School Violence Prevention Act, which requires school systems to adopt strong policies against bullying and harassment.

"Last year we fought hard to guarantee that North Carolina's teens have access to the honest, factually accurate information they need to make healthy decisions throughout their lives," state Rep. Susan Fisher (D-Buncombe). "The Healthy Youth Act ensures that, for the first time in 15 years, all public school students will have the opportunity to get that vital information to protect their health, their futures and their lives."

Lawmakers took some strong steps forward in protecting women against violence, including increasing funding for Sexual Assault programs and enacting the recommendations of the Joint Domestic Violence Committee. However, the establishment of the NC Human Trafficking Commission is still pending and funding for domestic violence programs is at risk in the coming year.

“According to the NC Department of Justice Report on Domestic Violence Related Homicides, we know that 100 people were killed in NC last year as a result of domestic violence,” added Rep. Deborah Ross (D-Wake). “As a member of the Joint Legislative Committee on Domestic Violence, I am proud of the work we are doing at the General Assembly to strengthen our laws on domestic violence, but we still have a lot of work to do.”

Other items reviewed in NC Women United Report Card include funding for the Home & Community Care Block Grant Funds and the NC Housing Trust Fund.

NC Women United (NCWU) is a coalition of progressive organizations and individuals working to achieve the full political, social, and economic equality of all women across North Carolina. NCWU works to build women's power through grassroots activism, community organizing, legislative advocacy, and engagement in the political process.

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