



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Almost 500 Activists from across the State to Attend Annual Reproductive Health and Rights Lobby Day**

### ***Access to Family Planning and Sex Education remain Key Issues***

Olympia, WA — Over 475 dedicated activists from all corners of the state – including clergy, parents, grandparents, and college students - will travel to Olympia to participate in the annual Reproductive Health and Rights Lobby Day event on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Citizen activists from every one of Washington's 49 legislative districts plan to attend.

The line-up of supportive state legislators speaking to the crowd at their 12:30pm rally on the Capitol steps includes: Senators Keiser and Kohl-Welles, and Representatives Linville, Liias, Walsh, and Williams. The Governor's office Health Policy Analyst Christina Hulet will also speak on behalf of the Governor.

Following the rally, attendees will meet with their elected representatives to advocate for family planning funding and sexual health education programs. The focus of lobbying efforts this year will be:

- Retaining \$10 million in state family planning funding to ensure that low-income Washingtonians can still access the services they need. The fiscal benefits of family planning are real and immediate. Every tax dollar spent on family planning in Washington saves more than four dollars in pregnancy care costs. By retaining \$10 million dollars in the 2009-2011 biennial budget for family planning, the State could prevent over \$37 million, in this biennium, in likely state funded pregnancy care costs for low-income individuals unable to access family planning services. With so many people losing their jobs and health insurance, demand for low-cost family planning services at local clinics will increase.

- The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Service Office (CSO) Family Planning Nurse program. The CSO family planning nurse program provides vital access to birth control in all 58 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families sites around the state. Some of these sites are in areas with no other family planning services nearby for low-income people. This program, which carries a nine dollar federal match for every one dollar the state puts in, has been reinstated in the current state budget, but it will take \$1 million to put it back into the Operating Budget for 2009-2011 and pull down the \$9 million in federal matching funds.
- The Proven Programs Act (SB 5629) which will ensure that the WA state Department of Health seeks funding only for sexual health education programs consistent with the Healthy Youth Act of 2007 and proven to have a positive impact. This bill has already passed the Senate Health Care Committee, and is expected to come to a vote on the Senate floor soon.

“These issues are critical for every Washingtonian especially now that we are in the midst of an economic crisis” said Elaine Rose, CEO of Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington. “Right now legislators need to identify programs that work and save the state money. Family planning and proven sexual health education programs do just that by giving people the services and information they need to stay healthy, plan their families, and take charge of their future.”

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Planned Parenthood Votes! Washington protects and advances reproductive health and rights in Washington on behalf of the five Planned Parenthood affiliates in Washington. Collectively, the affiliates provide clinical and education services at 38 Planned Parenthood clinics in 18 counties around the state.