



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 20, 2009

CONTACT:

Elaine Rose, CEO  
Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington  
206.328.7735 / cell 206.794.9550

Jennifer Allen, Director of Public Policy  
Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington  
360.561.9144

## **TODAY'S PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 5629 PROVIDES MORE SUPPORT FOR PROVEN, COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION IN WA**

### ***Bill awaiting Governor's signature removes the requirement that WA apply for federal abstinence-only-until-marriage funding***

Today's passage of Senate Bill 5629 is another important step toward getting all Washington youth the comprehensive, evidence-based sex education they need to make responsible decisions and protect their health. The bill removes a requirement that the WA State Department of Health apply for federal funds for abstinence-only-until marriage programs. The Senate gave final passage to the amended version of SB 5629 on a bipartisan vote of 33-15 with one excused.

"This is a smart decision. In the midst of a budget crisis, it makes sense that the legislature would pass a bill to allow the Department of Health (DOH) to make the best use of resources and seek funding for programs proven to have a positive impact," said Elaine Rose, CEO, Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington.

In 2007 the Washington State Legislature passed the Healthy Youth Act to create common sense standards for sexual health education. The law states that information provided in schools must be medically accurate and include information about both abstinence and contraception. However, under WA state law the Department of Health was still required to apply to the federal government for abstinence-only-until marriage funds (Title V) even though it was in conflict with the requirements of the Healthy Youth Act. In 2008, the DOH applied, and was rejected, for the federal abstinence funding because the application – which was consistent with the principals of the Healthy Youth Act – did not meet the Title V requirements of funding abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

Planned Parenthood Votes! Washington has successfully mobilized hundreds of activists around the state, who have made tens of thousands of contacts to legislators and decision makers for over 6 years in support of comprehensive sex education to keep our youth safe and healthy. This legislative session alone, Planned Parenthood Votes! Washington volunteers have made over 50,000 phone calls in support of funding for vital family planning services and Senate Bill 5629.”

### Background

Time after time studies have shown that abstinence until marriage education is not effective while comprehensive sex education – which includes information about abstinence and contraception – has positive results. Research by the United States Government Accountability Office in 2006 and the University of Washington in 2008 provide just two examples of how the data supports comprehensive sex education as the most effective method of teaching young people. In 2007 the Washington State Legislature passed the Healthy Youth Act to create common sense standards for sexual health education. To be most effective, information must be medically accurate and include information about both abstinence and contraception. While there is no requirement for WA public schools to teach sex education, if they choose to, it must adhere to the common sense requirements of the Healthy Youth Act.

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released data in March 2009 showing that teen birth rates increased nationally for the second year in a row after a previous 14-year decline. Washington saw an increase in teen pregnancy rates in 2006 and 2007 after a 16-year decline. Many experts believe that these statistics reflect the failed public health and sex education policies of the Bush Administration.

Public opinion polling shows broad support for offering young people more information about both abstinence and contraception.

###

**Planned Parenthood Votes! Washington** (PPVW) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization educating Washingtonians and policy-makers about reproductive health issues. VOTES! lobbies and educates to advance Planned Parenthood's mission and also engages in limited electoral activities.