



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2009

CONTACT:

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

Elaine Rose, CEO
Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington
206.328.7735

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS STEP FORWARD AND BACK IN 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Legislature takes strong policy steps but punts to 2010 on family planning funding

New policy moved reproductive rights forward decisively in Washington during the legislative session that concluded last night, but ironically, access to family planning care for low-income people was drastically reduced in the final budget. Among the successes counted by reproductive rights advocates was a bill that builds on the success of the Healthy Youth Act of 2007 by ensuring Washington will only pursue sexual health education programs that are medically accurate and proven effective.

Despite over 25,000 contacts to legislators made by Planned Parenthood supporters and constituents advocating to retain cost effective and life-saving family planning funding, the final budget adopted by the legislature cuts family planning services funding for over 14,000 low-income Washingtonians and could result in taxpayer costs of over \$16 million dollars in new state funded unintended pregnancy care.

FAMILY PLANNING VICTORIES

- SB 5629 – Originally known as the Proven Programs Act, this bill ensures that state applications for sexual health education funds are limited to programs that are medically accurate and proven effective. Additionally, this bill eliminates the requirement that the state apply for discredited federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program funds. Delivered to the Governor April 22nd.
- SB 5945 – This health partnership bill sets a goal for Washington to work with the federal government on health care reform to cover all Washingtonians by 2014. It also directs the Department of Social and Health Service to apply to the federal government for increased eligibility for full-scope Medicaid and the Take Charge Medicaid family planning program. Delivered to the Governor April 25th.
- E2SSB 5688 – This bill provides couples who register as domestic partners with all the state rights and responsibilities that come with legal marriage. Those eligible to register as domestic partners are

same gender couples and opposite gender couples where one member is 62 or over. Delivered to the Governor April 23rd.

- SB 5282 – The “Safe Baby Bottles Act” bans bisphenol A (BPA), a toxin known to harm reproductive development, from baby bottles and cups designed for children aged three and under. While this bill has not yet passed, it is still in play and may be acted upon in the upcoming special legislative session.

FAMILY PLANNING FUNDING LOSS

The 2009-2011 operating budget cuts the largest state-only family planning fund by 10% in year one of the biennium, to \$4.5 million, and then cuts it 70% in mid-2010 to \$1.5 million, based on a hope that the federal government will fix the Medicaid family planning program before the next legislative session. Though budget leaders acknowledged the need for family planning services by including budget language that commits to backfilling family planning funds in 2010 if federal funding does not materialize, providers call this approach impractical and improbable, and say legislators have simply put off the problem to next year when funding may be even tighter.

“Assuming that federal funds will materialize in just eight months to fix a family planning crisis for low-income patients that has been going on for four years is wishful thinking at best,” said Elaine Rose, CEO of Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington. “We’re glad the legislature supports family planning, but they just punted the problem to next year.”

“Family planning programs save over \$4 in Washington for every \$1 invested. It doesn’t make any sense to cut a program this cost-effective.” said Jennifer Allen, Director of Public Policy, Planned Parenthood VOTES! Washington. “Providers are grateful for the legislature’s commitment to ensure no further cut to family planning in 2010, but we feel certain that more state funding will be needed to meet that commitment and where will it come from? We’d better find it though, or we’ll be needing \$16 million instead for a major increase in state-funded unintended pregnancy care costs.”

Background

In 2007-2009, the Washington State Legislature allocated \$10 million for family planning to help serve the low income people no longer able to access the Medicaid family planning program Take Charge. Enrollment in Take Charge dropped by 51% from May 2005 to August 2008 because of burdensome federal restrictions. The legislative funding allocation filled less than half of the funding gap; in reality the funding lost for family planning services to the more than 46,000 people who have dropped from Take Charge amounts to over \$22 million.

Almost 175,000 people received family planning services at Washington state funded clinics in 2007. For many, family planning services - including life-saving cancer screenings, birth control and blood pressure checks – are their only source of basic health care and are a critical gateway to the health care system.

###

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.