



NEWS RELEASE

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**RALLY HELD TO CELEBRATE HALF OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS
BANNING TOBACCO USE IN SCHOOLS**

**Bold Leadership from NC Lt. Governor Helps Leading
Tobacco-Producing State prioritize tobacco prevention**

RALEIGH, NC – A state with strong historical and economic ties to tobacco has taken bold action in recent times to combat teen tobacco use. North Carolina elected officials, health advocates, parents and teens have come together to curb teen tobacco use with remarkable vigor and success, resulting in a culture shift that is gaining momentum and changing norms.

Leading the charge is **Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue**, chair of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF). A former smoker who understands first-hand the perils of tobacco use, Lt. Gov. Perdue speaks candidly and passionately about the need “to get tobacco products away from our children and out of our schools.”

On **Wednesday, July 6 at 9:00 a.m.**, Lt. Gov. Perdue will join other state leaders, prominent educators, public health advocates and teens for a **public rally** to celebrate the fact that more than half (58) of the state’s 115 school districts have adopted a 100% Tobacco Free Schools (TFS) policy. In a state where most adults remember smoking lounges for students in schools, this is indeed an occasion to celebrate.

The rally –will include teens from all over the state, prominent speakers and local teen entertainment. Along with celebrating this landmark achievement, the rally will also challenge the remaining 57 school districts to “join the drive to 100% tobacco free schools.” A 100% TFS policy prohibits tobacco use by anyone, anywhere at anytime on school property and at school related events.

In **Winston-Salem**, the epicenter of the country’s tobacco industry, this tobacco-free school campaign has resulted in a heated community debate. Recently, a leading health advocate and a school board member traded strong opinion pieces in *The Winston Salem Journal* on whether or not schools should go 100% tobacco-free.

The exchange prompted *Journal* editorial writer John Railey to pen a piece on the culture shift, which included this assessment, “Many of us are tied to tobacco ...Tobacco helped build this newspaper and many other community institutions. Heck, even the school system itself gets strong support from Reynolds American. And everybody, even the folks at Reynolds, knows that the pendulum is swinging hard against tobacco. Change is coming.”

Lt. Gov. Perdue has been mindful of North Carolina’s history while diligently spreading the prevention message. “I know many tobacco farmers who are proud of their livelihood and their heritage,” she says. “And not one of them has told me that they hope their kids grow up to be smokers. In fact, most of them feel just the opposite.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 200,000 young people under the age of 18 alive today in North Carolina will die prematurely because of tobacco-related illnesses.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, please visit www.hwtfc.org.