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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Erin Meyer, Planned Parenthood
(314) 531-7526, ext. 336
erin.meyer@ppslr.org

A Lobby Day to Protect Women's Health Volunteers from across the state demand new priorities

While Missouri state legislators continue to debate abortion restriction bills in committee and on the floor, concerned citizens from across Missouri will come together today, April 28, to remind their elected officials that the only way to truly reduce the numbers of abortion is through prevention. The lobby day is sponsored by 32 organizations including Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri and Faith Aloud.

The 2009 *Prevention First Act* (SB329 & HB999) includes initiatives that reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, and thus abortions, by getting to the root of the problem through prevention: comprehensive sex education, which was restricted in 2007, and increasing access to affordable family planning services by restoring the State Family Planning Program and ensuring patient protection at the pharmacy.

These common-sense solutions are backed by a majority of Missourians. A recent poll by the Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that 86% of Missourians support comprehensive sex education in schools and 59% of Missourians would like their legislators to focus on preventing unintended pregnancy instead of placing additional restrictions on abortion. But these constituent opinions continue to fall on deaf ears in Jefferson City.

While at the capital, supporters will be talking to their representatives and senators, and blogging and twittering about their experiences. They are ready for their voices to be heard and taken seriously.

There are over 750,000 uninsured Missourians including 146,150 uninsured children. [Kaiser Family Foundation] Missouri's teen birth rate went up 6% in 2006 compared to a national average increase of 4%. [Guttmacher Institute] Missouri ranks among the top 15 states for sexually transmitted diseases – with St. Louis rating first in the nation for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. [CDC]

Meanwhile the following 10 prevention bills languish with little or no legislative action: SB 260/HB 520 Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies, HB 413 Cancer Screening Coverage, SB 316 Comprehensive Sex Education, SB 329 Prevention First Act, HB 342 Prostate Research Development, HB 370 Expedited Partner Therapy, HB 430 Uterine Fibroids Information, SB 203/HB 584 Patient Protection at Pharmacies.

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Sponsors include Faith Aloud, NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri, Planned Parenthood Affiliates in Missouri, ACLU of Eastern Missouri, A. T. Still University Medical Students for Choice, Columbia NOW, Drury ALLIES, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Springfield, Greater Kansas City Progressive Women's Coalition, Human Rights Campaign, Missouri State University BiGALA, Missouri State University Jane DOE – Daughters of Eve, Missouri State University Young Democrats, Mizzou Feminist Student Union, MU AIDS Awareness Coalition, MU College Democrats, MU Hillel House, MU Students for Progressive Action, MU Women's Center, National Council of Jewish Women – St. Louis Section, National Women's Political Caucus – Metro St. Louis, Northeast Missouri NOW, Peace Network of the Ozarks, PROMO, Republicans for Choice, Rolla Area Voice for Choice, Statewide NOW, St. Louis NOW, Truman State University College Democrats, Truman State University VOX Chapter, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Rolla, Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice.