

## 2008 Caucus Action Plan

House Democrats will continue working to provide opportunities for all North Carolinians to prosper. During this Session, our efforts to expand those opportunities will reflect the realities of the current economy. Our priorities are:

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### **1. Helping Families Make Ends Meet**

- Help families become or remain homeowners by providing mortgage counseling, legal assistance, an expanded Home Protection Program and additional Housing Trust Fund dollars to support affordable housing
- Enhance economic security by strengthening job training and retraining programs in community colleges, encouraging new industries and supporting existing businesses, providing tax credits to small businesses, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit for working families, and providing cost of living increases for state workers and retirees

### **2. Improving Education**

- Support public education by continuing our efforts to raise teacher pay to the national average, providing additional funding for the dropout prevention grant program and increasing access to higher education

### **3. Expanding Access to Health Care**

- Expand health care coverage to children who meet federal qualifications for Medicaid or Health Choice and create a health care policy council to address issues of health care access, minority health and other health related issues
- Improve public confidence in the public mental health system by providing stronger oversight and expanding services for people with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and substance abuse problems

### **4. Supporting Our Military**

- Support our veterans by providing tuition-free education at a NC community college or UNC system school for dependent children of veterans who are killed while serving our country, a property tax exemption for veterans who have a 100 percent service-connected disability and more money for mental health, substance abuse and traumatic brain injury services for returning war veterans

## **5. Protecting the Environment**

- Demonstrate environmental stewardship by enacting policies and providing resources to reduce the effects of current and future droughts, appropriating additional funds for energy grants for state buildings and enacting a sales tax holiday for the purchase of Energy Star Appliances

## **6. Ensuring Prosperous and Safe Communities**

- Strengthen juvenile justice by restoring funding for JCPCs and increasing grant funding for gang prevention programs
- Combat illegal immigration by enabling NC's sheriffs to participate in the 287(g) program
- Address domestic violence by lowering the number of violations of protective orders constituting a felony and providing grants to counties for shelters for domestic violence victims
- Improve confidence in the criminal justice system by reforming the probation/parole process and pushing for enactment of the NC Racial Justice Act

## **7. Improving Transportation**

- Address North Carolina's transportation needs by reviewing and implementing certain recommendations of the 21st Century Transportation Committee

## **8. Strengthening Confidence in Government**

- Build on the progress made during the 2007 Session by providing additional staff for the Ethics Commission and the State Board of Elections to maintain strong ethics and campaign finance laws