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RALEIGH _ Rep. Joe Hackney was elected Wednesday to a second term as Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

In his acceptance speech, Speaker Hackney immediately challenged his fellow House members to get to work reinvigorating the state's economy and continuing to improve education.

"My confidence in our abilities stems from the solid foundation established by those who came before us," Speaker Hackney said. "We do not start from scratch as we face these challenges. My confidence stems from my belief in you. Assembled in this chamber are teachers, doctors, lawyers, preachers, artists, business owners, parents and grandparents. Some of you have family roots in this state that reach back hundreds of years and others of you are just settling in. My confidence stems from our collective experience. We are fortunate to have a few who have dedicated years of their lives to the work of this chamber. We have weathered the economic downturns of the past and we have, with careful planning, nurtured deficits into surpluses over time. I believe that this crisis will be no different but for the numbers."

During his 28-year tenure in the House of Representatives, Speaker Hackney has been one of the General Assembly's leading advocates for openness in government and ethics and lobbying reforms. He encouraged his fellow House members Wednesday to maintain high ethical standards and to continue the reforms they have worked on for the past two sessions.

"To succeed, we must continue our emphasis on ethics. It must be clear that we are acting in the public interest, not our self-interest," Speaker Hackney said. "Our work and our finances should be abundantly transparent. Public confidence is critical to our success."

Speaker Hackney was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1980 and is entering his 15th term. He has been responsible for much of the significant environmental legislation in North Carolina for the past 25 years and has also been a strong advocate for the judicial system. His previous posts include House Democratic Leader, House Majority Leader and Speaker Pro Tempore. Speaker Hackney began his legal career as a clerk for North Carolina Supreme Court Associate Justice Frank Huskins. He worked as an assistant district attorney in Orange and Chatham counties from 1971-74 before entering politics as the campaign manager for North Carolina Congressman Ike Andrews. Since 1974, Speaker Hackney has been a partner in the Epting & Hackney law firm in Chapel Hill. In addition, he and his brother continue to operate the family cattle farm in Chatham County. Speaker Hackney received a bachelor's degree in political science and a juris doctorate degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He and his wife, Betsy, have two adult sons, Dan and Will.

Speaker Hackney is also president of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the nation's premier advocacy and continuing education group for state lawmakers.