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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RED FLAG CAMPAIGN MOVES TO NEW DISTRICTS TO SLASH TOBACCO SALES TO NC YOUTH

CAMPAIGN WILL CONTINUE TO TARGET DISTRICTS THAT HAVE SOME OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS

May 3, 2006 (DURHAM, N.C.) – NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue will join two of the state's leading public health agencies and retailers around North Carolina to "raise the red flag" on tobacco sales to minors by targeting districts that have some of the highest rates of tobacco sales to minors based on research conducted by the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health. The Red Flag Campaign, which was unveiled last year, will be launched in new districts at events held in Durham at the American Tobacco Historic District, in Hope Mills at Carlie C.'s IGA grocery store and at the Forsyth County Health Department in Winston-Salem.

Last year, HWTF, the Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) and the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS) and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) joined together to launch the **Red Flag campaign**. The campaign is now being expanded to include several new counties.

The campaign is designed to prompt retailers to check for a red border around the photo on N.C. drivers' licenses every time someone request tobacco products. In N.C., a red border means the customer is under 18 and prohibited from purchasing alcohol and tobacco products. As the campaign slogan puts it: **If you see red, the tobacco sale is dead.**

"Retail clerks are the front line in protecting our children from the dangers of tobacco products," said Lt. Governor Bev. Perdue, HWTF chair, who kicked off festivities at the American Tobacco Historic District in Durham. "Research shows that 90 percent of adult smokers in North Carolina began using cigarettes before the age of 18. The Red Flag campaign will help prevent young people from having access to tobacco products and will **ultimately save the lives of thousands of North Carolina's young people.**"

The campaign is rolled out over a three-year period, focusing each year on three different targeted ALE districts. Counties included in year two of the Red Flag campaign include:

ALE District 4: Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Granville, Nash, Orange, Person, Vance, Wake and Warren counties.

ALE District 5: Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland and Wayne counties.

ALE District 7: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Iredell, Lincoln, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties.

"The Red Flag campaign is not creating a new system to enforce; it's simply and clearly reinforcing our existing prohibitions on selling tobacco to minors. We worked with the retail community to develop awareness materials that are easy to use and will make a difference," said Michael Robertson, ALE director.

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Red Flag also has a component that allows leaders in the retail community to voice their support for the campaign. Members of the “Retailers for Red Flag” program have pledged to work to generate awareness of the campaign’s mission among store managers and clerks. Retailers for Red Flag members include the **NC Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA)**, the **NC Association of Convenience Stores (NCACS)**, **Lowe’s Foods** and **Food Lion** have all formally endorsed the initiative.

ABOUT THE ALCOHOL LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION’S OF TOBACCO EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

The Alcohol Law Enforcement Division's Tobacco Education and Enforcement program is conducted in partnership with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund. It is also a cooperative effort among community agencies, local law enforcement agencies, merchants, parents and teens. ALE, a division of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, has 76 agents throughout North Carolina who enforce alcohol and tobacco laws.

ABOUT THE NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is responsible for ensuring the health, safety and well being of all North Carolinians, providing the human service needs for fragile populations like the mentally ill, deaf, blind and developmentally disabled, and helping poor North Carolinians achieve economic independence. The agency touches the lives of virtually every North Carolinian from birth to old age – prenatal programs, child development programs, and rest home regulations are all part of DHHS charge.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund 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.HealthWellNC.com.

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