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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WAKE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MAJORITY SILENCES PUBLIC, CONTINUES SPENDING SPREE

Growing Public Concern Over Lack of Transparency in Board Decisions

Raleigh, NC—July 22, 2010—In an ongoing effort to marginalize public participation and limit democratic processes, the Wake County Board of Education majority cast a predictable 5-4 vote to eliminate standing committees and restrict citizen input at its meetings.

When asked by board member Dr. Anne McLaurin to continue a long-standing policy of allowing public comment at both monthly Board meetings, Chairman Ron Margiotta said he would “never support that in a million years,” openly opposing maintaining the existing minimal levels of public participation in Board meetings. Further, in response to increased criticism of Board majority policies, Margiotta has authorized spending more than \$14,000 on extra security and armed police officers since December. At one recent meeting, at least four armed police officers and more than six security officers were present at a meeting attended by fewer than 50 people.

“If the Board majority created an environment that offered transparency and fostered open, constructive debate, there would be no need for the expensive, excessive show of force that we've witnessed at recent meetings,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair of the Great Schools in Wake Coalition. “Their continued disregard for public opinion, and their dismissal of important facts supported by well-documented research is stunning.”

Other actions of the Board majority on Tuesday reflected a propensity for ignoring public opinion, wasteful spending, and a distortion of facts:

- Despite the overwhelming public support for hiring a new Superintendent with a strong educational background expressed at recent meetings with search firm Heidrick & Struggles, the Board majority altered policy governing the job description of the System Superintendent so that they can hire someone with **no educational background**. Heidrick & Struggles was awarded the bid, despite being the highest priced and least experienced firm considered.

- Credit was attributed to the Board majority for saving tax dollars. In reality, cuts made to this year's budget came from the state and saved no local tax dollars. Claims of savings due to an anticipated move to new offices in Cary fail to acknowledge the fact that existing property on Wake Forest Road has yet to be sold, and must be maintained.
- The Board voted 5-4 to convert Leesville Middle and Leesville Elementary Schools to traditional calendars, at a loss of \$14.1 million in classroom capacity. It is now estimated that the Northwest region of the county will be at above 110 percent capacity for middle school seats and above 100 percent capacity for elementary school seats in 2013-14.

For a fuller account of wasted funding and poor public stewardship of tax dollars by this Board majority, please visit <http://wakeupwakecounty.com/cms/gsiwmoneywatch>.

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About Great Schools in Wake Coalition:

A project of WakeUP Wake County, Great Schools in Wake Coalition (GSIW) is a community coalition of organizations, business leaders, parents and citizen advocates who are working to ensure educational excellence in the Wake County Public School System. GSIW's mission is to provide accurate information to educate the public about policy initiatives that would impact the quality of education, foster well-informed discussions about critical education issues, and advocate for policies that improve public education in Wake County. For more information on the Coalition or to join, please visit: greatschoolsinswake.org.