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First Lady Maria Shriver Highlights Key Efforts of WE Connect Campaign, Presents Model to Nation's Governors

Washington, D.C – Today, First Lady Maria Shriver highlighted her groundbreaking WE Connect Campaign efforts and presented key elements of the initiative to our nation's Governors during the National Governors Association's (NGA) Winter Meeting. Shriver's appearance before the NGA comes at a time when our worsening national economic climate makes it more important than ever to help families across the nation connect to a variety of support services, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Food Stamps, the Child Tax Credit, Child Care Credit and Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). As the nation's leaders are discussing solutions to our economic crisis, Shriver has asked them to join her in a national effort to increase the number of people who use the EITC and other existing federal resources to help lift families out of poverty.

"The state of the economy and the difficult challenges so many people face in our country is of great concern to us all. We are living at a time when, across our nation, unemployment, home foreclosures and poverty are all on the rise," said First Lady Maria Shriver. "Now more than ever, it is so important that we collaborate to reach families and connect them to available resources that can truly make a difference in their lives."

To help enhance the efforts of other states, Shriver has made available to all Governors three tools developed in California for WE Connect that have made an incredible impact:

Web Connector

Developed by Intuit, this innovative web tool is available at no cost to all states and serves as a one-stop-shop online resource where people can determine if they qualify for five federal programs, including the EITC, Food Stamps, the Child Tax Credit, the Child Care Credit and WIC. This tool makes it easy for families to learn about programs that can put money directly in their pockets, all at the click of a mouse. The importance of the EITC and the Child Tax Credit has been demonstrated recently by their expansion as part of the economic stimulus package but their impact cannot be made if people don't know about them. This tool can be used to do just that.

La Opinión Supplement

La Opinión, the nation's leading Spanish language news outlet, has developed a 24-page special publication dedicated to services and resources available to California's working families, and has offered to work with other states to do the same. Close to 10 million individuals have been reached through the supplement by distributing them in schools, libraries, non-profits, churches and hundreds of other organizations that share our commitment to helping working families.

Public Service Announcement

The WE Connect Campaign has created a public service announcement to help raise awareness about key programs and resources, including "Connectors" such as Bono, Marian Wright Edelman and Heidi Klum, among many others. Each Governor can add their name and face by becoming a Connector today and showcasing the PSA in their state. The PSA will be available to view at: www.firstlady.ca.gov

Since 2005, Shriver has raised awareness of the EITC through the WE Connect Campaign, including key resources to serve working families who work hard, but struggle to make ends meet. In addition to the tax credit and financial incentive programs available, www.weconnect.net aims to help people connect with programs and services to keep their homes, put food on their tables and find jobs in a time of rising unemployment.

Through the WE Connect Campaign, nearly 3.5 million Californians have been connected using the website, WEb Connector tool and La Opinión supplements.

An innovative statewide effort promoting the benefits of the EITC, WE Connect uses all available channels to reach out to the over 625,000 eligible families in California currently not claiming this credit and connects them with other key programs and services. The campaign partners with community organizations, statewide programs and major corporations to reach working families where they shop, eat, work, live and learn.

For more information on the WE Connect campaign, visit: www.WEconnect.net

About the WE Connect Partners

The WE Connect campaign partners with community organizations, statewide programs, unions, small businesses and major corporations to connect with working families. WE Connect partners include: Intuit, The Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women, Legal Aid Society of Orange County, Central California Legal Services, California Volunteers, AmeriCorps, California Department of Social Services, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, United Way of Bay Area, La Opinión, California Association of Food Banks, ClearChannel, California First 5, SEIU, AFSCME, Save the Children, AT&T, PG&E, Sempra Energy Utilities, California Black Media Association, Visa, Inc., California Network of Small Business Development Centers, and Wal-Mart, in addition to over 200 regional organizations across the state.

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