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Event: Press conference and protest 10/10/23 at 11:30 am in front of the NCGA

Speakers: **Joselle Torres**, Communications Manager, Democracy NC
Aminah Ghaffar, Policy Director, 7 Directions of Service
Chris Nobblitt, Coordinating Committee, North Carolina Poor People's Campaign
Karen Ziegler, Lead Organizer, Democracy Out Loud

[Raleigh, NC] —In collaboration with the *North Carolina Poor People's Campaign* and *7 Directions of Service*, *Democracy Out Loud* will hold a press conference and protest on Tuesday, October 10th at 11:30 am to urge legislators to protect North Carolinians' right to vote freely and fairly, and to protect our environment. Anti-voter bills SB 747 and SB 749 have been vetoed by Governor Cooper because they will make it harder for North Carolinians to cast their ballots and will destroy our county and state Boards of Elections. Also vetoed by Governor Cooper, anti-environmental bill HB 600 will weaken environmental protections and endanger our rivers, wells, and water quality across the state, which all North Carolinians depend on for our daily needs. We are urging legislators to uphold Governor Cooper's vetoes and protect free and fair elections as well as the environment in our state.

SB747 is an attempt by extremist legislators to make voting harder for young and nonwhite voters. These voters tend to vote for candidates who support full and equal access to the ballot box. The bill will eliminate the grace period for vote-by-mail, require a difficult "signature match," make it easier to discard absentee ballots for minor issues,

remove voters from the rolls if they skip midterm elections, and allow partisan poll watchers to listen to and photograph voter's conversations with poll workers. It also fails to fund these changes.

Democracy Out Loud activist and election volunteer Marci Curtis states: "Voters should be able to cast their ballots freely and in secret. SB 747 will allow partisan poll observers to take your picture and listen to any conversations you have with election officials. This is voter intimidation, intended to reduce turnout at the polls. Also under SB 747, if you skip an off-year election, you would have to make a request to stay registered. This is an added barrier to voting for working and young people. These extremist legislators don't believe in the merits of their policies. They believe that they can only win by reducing voter turnout. We have to join together to protect our right to vote freely and fairly."

The groups also voiced concerns that under **SB 749**, proposed changes to current election laws will lead to deadlocked county boards and drastic reductions in early voting locations and hours. Voters overwhelmingly rejected similar measures in 2018 as part of a referendum.

Karen Ziegler, Lead Organizer for the activist group, said, "This bill steals our votes because it will lead to only one early voting location in each county in the event of a deadlock, which will happen by design. Extremist legislators are trying to take away our early voting opportunities because they are afraid their policies are too unpopular for them to win elections without cheating. Most of us want common-sense gun laws, abortion rights, and fair taxation. During this entire session, the majority party has been legislating against these things."

HB 600 benefits corporate polluters at our expense, risking clean drinking water, fishing, farming, and our health into the future. HB600 aims to expedite the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate Extension by weakening and restricting the 401 water quality permit, which is needed for energy transmission projects. It slashes review timelines and opportunities for public input and deems a permit granted if the severely understaffed agency fails to issue a decision on time.

Dr. Crystal Cavalier-Keck, Water Protector and Executive Director of 7 Directions of Service said: "Without clean water, all life suffers. What is going through the minds of

our elected leaders in Raleigh who continue to sacrifice such a precious and finite resource? For our communities, protecting the health of our streams and rivers has proven to be a nonpartisan issue. Water consistently unites us across differences, and we're going to keep mobilizing to ensure our laws reflect not only the will of the people but the ancient laws of nature that treat water as sacred."

Democracy Out Loud, 7 Directions of Service, and the North Carolina Poor People's Campaign urge North Carolinians to contact their representatives in opposition to SB 747, SB 749, and HB 600.

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