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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Sanford Signs Virtual Schools Bill **BILL AIMED AT PROVIDING ADDITIONAL** **EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS VIA INTERNET**

Columbia, S.C. – May 17, 2007 – Gov. Mark Sanford today ceremonially signed the bill creating the South Carolina Virtual Schools Program, a program originally recommended in his Executive Budget aimed at creating more learning options for our state’s students.

The new law will give students greater flexibility to earn graduation credits online, and would also allow them to take courses that wouldn’t normally be offered in their attendance zones, such as Advanced Placement or foreign languages. The legislation calls for \$3.6 million to implement the program.

“While we certainly have miles to go in terms of creating a system in South Carolina that maximizes choice for all parents and students, this legislation is an important step forward on that front,” Gov. Sanford said. “This bill will not only open up choices that wouldn’t normally be available to students, but it also provides an important opportunity for more students to interact via the Internet, which in this changing world will become an increasingly important learning tool. I want to thank the House and Senate for getting this bill to my desk, because we believe it can materially impact education for a whole lot of kids in our state.”

With this legislation, South Carolina would join a growing number of states with a similar program. The Florida Virtual School already enrolls 65,000 students. The Georgia Virtual School was created in 2005 as part of an initiative to offer high school students greater choices, with \$1.4 million toward the program to serve 1,285 students. Virginia has purchased the curriculum for its Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School from Florida to create a virtual schools program that targets prospective Advanced Placement students in order to increase participation and success in advanced level coursework.

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