



**SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE MEMBER
GILDA COBB-HUNTER RECEIVES
WILKINS AWARD FOR LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP**

Award presented by the Riley Institute at Furman University

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.—Gilda Cobb-Hunter, a member of the South Carolina State House of Representatives who represents Orangeburg County in District 66, has been named the winner of the fourth annual David Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership.

The award is sponsored by the Riley Institute at Furman University and will be presented to Cobb-Hunter at the annual Wilkins Award dinner in Columbia Jan. 12, 2009.

David Wilkins, the former Speaker of the South Carolina House who currently serves as U.S. Ambassador to Canada, will be the keynote speaker for the event. Former U.S. Secretary of Education and S.C. Governor Richard W. Riley will also be in attendance to honor Cobb-Hunter.

The award dinner begins with a reception at 6 p.m. in the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. Tickets are \$125 per person, and can be reserved by calling 864-235-8330.

The Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership award is given annually to a state legislator who “embodies the highest principles of leadership based on integrity, compassion, vision, civility and courage.” The previous winners have been John Drummond, President Pro-Tem Emeritus of the Senate; Bobby Harrell, Speaker of the House; and Senator Hugh K. Leatherman.

“Gilda Cobb-Hunter brings a great deal of common sense and energy to her work on issues that are of immense importance to all South Carolinians,” said Don Gordon, director of the Riley Institute. “She has a well-deserved reputation as a keenly intelligent, ethical and highly dedicated public servant, and we believe there could be no more appropriate winner of the Wilkins Award.”

Cobb-Hunter, a Democrat, was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1992. She was the first African American woman in Orangeburg County ever elected to a statewide office and the first freshman appointed to the powerful House Ways and Means Committee.

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When she was elected House Minority Leader in 1997, a position she held for three years, she became the first person of color to lead a legislative caucus. She is now the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee and a member of the Joint Bond Review Committee.

Cobb-Hunter also served as vice-chair of the African American History Monument Commission, leading the historic effort to erect the first monument to African Americans on the grounds of any state capitol. She represents South Carolina as the National Committeewoman to the Democratic National Committee (DNC), where she also serves as a member of the DNC's Executive Committee. She is the chair for the National Black Caucus of State Legislators Youth committee and chairs the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus' Health Committee.

Since 1985, Cobb-Hunter has been the executive director of CASA/Family Systems, an agency serving victims of family violence and abuse in Orangeburg, Bamberg and Calhoun counties. She holds a B.S. degree in African-American History from Florida A&M University and a M.A. degree in American History from Florida State University. In May 2007 she received an honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from the Medical University of South Carolina. She is married to Dr. Terry K. Hunter, Executive Director of FACETS, and they reside in Orangeburg.

The Riley Institute at Furman, named for Furman graduate Richard Riley, offers a broad array of programs designed to engage students and citizens across South Carolina in the various arenas of politics, public policy, and public leadership. The Institute created the David H. Wilkins Legislative Leadership Program in 2006 in honor of the respected South Carolina politician.

For more information, contact the Riley Institute at Furman at 864-294-3546 or visit its website at www.furman.edu/riley/.

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