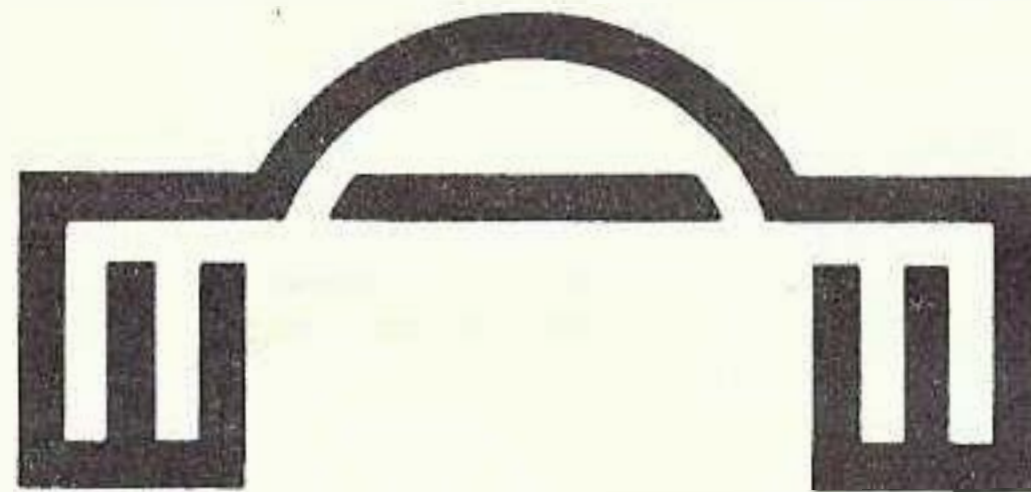




**NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.**

News Release

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Fewer Boards Needed in State Government, Says N.C. Center

There are too many boards, commissions, and councils in the executive branch of state government, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research in a major report released today. After three years of research, the Center has identified 320 different citizen advisory boards in the executive branch of state government. These are all part-time groups to which citizens are appointed by the governor and other executive officials.

"North Carolina has 5 boards advising programs for the blind, 7 on water policy, 6 different library groups, and 9 on vocational education subjects taught in public schools," says Ran Coble, the director of the Center and one of the authors of the report.

"Many of the 320 boards provide valuable public service and encourage citizen participation in state government," Coble says. The Center praised the contributions of many boards, including the State Board of Education, Social Services Commission, and Board of Transportation. "Other boards, however, are inactive, ineffective or duplicative and need to be disbanded," Coble continues. The Center identified 98 groups that it feels should be abolished.

The Center's 600-page report covers four areas -- appointments to boards, costs, powers and duties, and problems with legislators serving on executive boards. The major findings are as follows:

Appointments

Blacks and women were not appointed to state boards in proportion to their representation in the state's population during the first 6 years of the administration of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.

- ° Blacks comprise 22.4% of the population but received only 13% of the appointments.
- ° Women constitute 51.4% of the population but received 28% of the appointments.

"In 1984, there were 59 boards with no women members, 106 with no blacks, and 287 with no Indians," says Jim Bryan, the principal author of the study. And, over 20% of the Governor's appointments were from the capital area (the Fourth Congressional district); this area contains only 9.1% of the population.

In response to the Center's preliminary findings, the 1984 General Assembly passed a resolution urging all elected officials to appoint more blacks, women, and Indians. Bryan points out that Governor James E. Holshouser Jr. began to bring women and minorities into government and that Governor Hunt improved on that record. "The challenge to Governor Martin is to continue this progress so that all segments of the population participate in advising the executive branch."

Costs

The 320 boards cost at least \$4.7 million a year. "We say 'at least,'" says Bryan, "because 58 boards contend they cost nothing, even though state agency workers staff these groups and board members are reimbursed for their travel expenses." Three-fourths of the \$4.7 million in costs is for staff support. Bryan cautions against abolishing boards merely for cost reasons, however, saying, "You have to balance the cost against the contribution made by the group and the amount of citizen participation purchased with this money."

The average cost of a board is \$14,731. State funds supply about two-thirds of the total. Federal funds supply 29%, with the remaining funds coming from receipts, interest, and private money.

Separation of Powers Problems

The Center also says there is still a problem with legislators serving on executive branch boards and thereby violating the separation of powers provision in the N.C. Constitution. "Legislators still hold 142 positions on 56 executive branch boards," says Coble. This practice continues despite a 1982 N.C. Supreme Court opinion that led the General Assembly to remove legislators from 32 boards. But Coble says the job is unfinished.

The Center continues to question the constitutionality of the Advisory Budget Commission (ABC). Though in 1983 the legislature amended the ABC's authority to make it mostly advisory, the Center says the ABC members still are approving or disapproving budget items in administering the budget. The state constitution gives that power solely to the governor. In addition, there are still a minimum of ten legislators who serve on the ABC. The report says this practice also violates the separation of powers requirement.

Powers and Organization of Boards

The state agencies with the most boards are the Departments of Human Resources (52), Administration (44), and Cultural Resources (36).

The Center's research discloses that 88 different boards have the authority to adopt rules and regulations. "There is little doubt that boards like the Radiation Protection Commission and Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission need rulemaking power," says Coble, "but why give such powers to groups like the Boards for the Agricultural Hall of Fame, Governor's Western Residence Association, and Tryon Palace? Too many boards with rulemaking power has led to too many rules."

The Center was critical of the 1984 legislative response to the plethora of rules. Coble says, "The legislators don't see the value of the Administrative Procedure Act, which requires state policies to be in writing so citizens can be sure what the policies are. The legislature repealed major portions of the Act but instead ought to reduce the number of boards who have rule-making power."

Recommendations

The 1983-84 General Assembly created 21 new boards. "The number of boards keeps growing like kudzu," says Coble. "The legislature and the governor have to begin to look at the system of boards and commissions, or too much of this kudzu will choke off useful citizen participation."

Because of the constant growth in the number of boards and the illogical placement of them within departments, the Center proposes three alternatives for reducing the number of state boards that are inactive, ineffective, or duplicative.

- ° Alternative One is for the General Assembly to place a statutory ceiling on the number of boards allowed in each of the 20 departments in the executive branch.
- ° Alternative Two is for the legislature to give the governor and nine other officials elected statewide a ceiling on the number of boards they can maintain in the departments under their control.
- ° In Alternative Three, the Center simply lists 98 boards that should be abolished.

Implementing any of these recommendations would save the taxpayers about \$1.4 million, says the Center. "The goal is to get the most citizen participation for the least cost. We think there's room for improvement."

Copies of the report are available for \$15 plus \$1.32 for postage and handling from the N.C. Center, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C. 27602.

The Center is an independent, nonprofit organization formed in 1977 to conduct research on state government and important public policy issues facing the state. The Center is funded by the Mary Reynolds Babcock and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundations in Winston-Salem, 34 corporations, and 500 individual members. Past Center reports have examined disparities in funding among local school districts, comparable worth, state budget priorities, and the tobacco industry.

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