



NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.

NEWS RELEASE

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N.C. CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, North Carolina's independent, state-level think-tank and government watchdog, is celebrating its Tenth Anniversary this week. The Center is celebrating with a commemorative dinner open to the public in Raleigh and the release of a 10-year report on the Center's varied activities since its founding in 1977.

Phillip J. Kirk Jr., Chief of Staff for Republican Governor James G. Martin, and state Rep. Dan Blue (D-Wake) of Raleigh will be the keynote speakers at the anniversary dinner on Friday, September 25, at the Sheraton Crabtree Hotel. Kirk and Blue will discuss their visions for North Carolina in the next 10 years. Thad L. Beyle, Chairman of the Center's Board of Directors and Professor of Political Science at UNC-CH, will also review the Center's accomplishments and challenges for the future.

"We're delighted to be able to take a moment and review what we've been doing since 1977," says Ran Coble, Executive Director of the N.C. Center since 1981. "We're proud of the Center's record of solid accomplishment in examining public policy and recommending ways to improve state government in North Carolina," he adds.

Over the last ten years, the Center's research has often led to changes in state government policies. Coble cited the following as highlights of the Center's service to the citizens of North Carolina:

- * The 1984-87 sessions of the N.C. General Assembly abolished 78 of the 98 state boards and commissions that the Center had identified as inactive, ineffective, or duplicative. One legislator said this saved the state more than \$1.5 million.

- * The State Board of Education passed rules effective July 1, 1985 to require public school teachers to teach only in their fields of certification. A Center study in 1981 had revealed that many teachers were teaching subjects they weren't certified to teach, such as an English teacher being assigned to teach math.

- * The 1987 General Assembly enacted legislation lowering credit insurance rates by 12.5 percent, saving consumers an estimated \$28 million a year. The law also prohibits lenders from requiring credit insurance when consumers purchase a car or household appliances. The Center pointed out the need for reform in credit insurance in a 1985 article in its magazine, North Carolina Insight.

- * The 1987 General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Department of Human Resources to establish an Aging Policy Plan for the elderly citizens of North Carolina. The Center had recommended this after conducting a statewide series of community forums on policies affecting older adults.

* The Center pointed out problems with the N.C. Department of Commerce's reports on "new jobs created" in North Carolina. The Center found that only about one-half of the jobs announced really exist -- and dubbed the other half "phantom jobs." The Center said this has been a problem under all governors since the late 1950s, and in 1987, the Department took steps to report the number of new jobs more accurately.

The Center's research examines state government programs, assesses how well they work, and often makes recommendations on how they might be improved. The Center's purview includes the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as other major institutions involved in public policy matters --the news media, the academic and business communities, and local governments across North Carolina.

Board Chairman Thad Beyle said the Center has four goals: (1) to educate the public about how state government works; (2) to conduct research on particular state agency programs and evaluate how well they work; (3) to research public policy issues of statewide significance; and (4) to monitor the legislature and enhance its accountability to the public. The Center publishes a bimonthly newsletter and quarterly magazine, North Carolina Insight, for its members. It also publishes book-length research reports and holds a yearly symposium on an important public policy issue.

Asked for an example of how the Center educates the public and evaluates state government, Beyle offers the example of the Center's study of teacher certification "We went right down to each school district. Then we went down to each individual teacher. I even saw my wife's line on the printout." Mrs. Beyle is a high school music teacher in Chapel Hill. "Luckily, she was not teaching out-of-field," he laughs.

The Center was founded in 1977 by Robert Spearman, William G. Hancock, Joel Fleishman and Thomas W. Lambeth. Spearman is a Raleigh attorney, and Hancock is a Durham attorney and former state Senator. Fleishman is Vice President of Duke University, while Lambeth is Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem.

"In the beginning, we were a struggling public interest group," says Spearman, still on the Board of Directors of the Center. "Many times, such groups will make a splash and be effective for a year or two and then fade away, completely or in effectiveness. Instead, we have become increasingly competent, influential, and established. As we had hoped, the Center has become an influential part of the North Carolina political, governmental, and journalistic scene."

"Good honest responsive government can never exist without constant press scrutiny," says Fleishman. "Yet the daily press is usually more attentive to short-term crises and wrongdoing than to longer-term problems and achievements. That was the near-void we wanted to fill with the N.C. Center."

The founders deliberately set up a bipartisan Board of Directors to avoid the pitfalls they saw in some partisan think-tanks at the federal level. The Center Board's composition parallels the population of North Carolina in its proportion of men and women, Republicans and Democrats, and blacks, whites, and Indians from the east, west, and Piedmont areas of the state.

Bipartisanship has been central to the Center's success. "When you are in state government as I have been, you recognize the need to have a thorough, balanced presentation of the issues," says Grace J. Rohrer, a Center Board member for all 10 years and now a Cabinet-level special assistant to Governor Martin. "The Center has provided this through high-quality research untainted by ideological bias. What better resource can a state have than one which provides the public as well as state leaders with an objective analysis of the issues on which they have to make decisions?"

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has received major support over the past decade from The Mary Reynolds Babcock and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundations. "The Center has been the fuel for a lot of important activity in the state," says Tom Lambeth of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. "If the Center weren't there, the first thing on our agenda as a foundation would be to go out and help someone set one up."

The Center has also received grant support from 18 other national and state foundations, 105 corporate contributors in North Carolina, and more than 500 dues-paying members.

Over the years, the Center has produced:

- 35 issues of North Carolina Insight, the Center's quarterly magazine covering a broad range of issues;

- 16 Research Reports varying from a 618-page analysis of state boards and commissions, to a directory of all the foundation and corporate giving programs in the state, to a 220-page report assessing the for-profit hospital movement in North Carolina;

- 6 Guides to the N.C. General Assembly, including rankings of the effectiveness of legislators and the influence of lobbyists;

- 7 Symposia on topics ranging from federal budget cuts to campaign finance to policies affecting the aging;

- 3 Volumes of How the Legislators Voted in the 1981-84 legislative sessions;

- 2 Anthologies, one on the tobacco industry and one a collection of articles on state government for use in high school and college classes;

- A Guide to the Judiciary, with each state judge rated by N.C. attorneys on his or her performance on the bench; and

- Scores of speeches and presentations to various citizen groups including local chambers of commerce, women's groups, local government officials, and university classes.

Copies of the Center's Tenth Anniversary Report are available for \$5 plus \$1 postage and handling. For more information, call Ran Coble, executive director of the Center at (919) 832-2839 or write N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602.

Tickets to the Center's Tenth Anniversary Celebration Dinner are available for \$25 from Nancy Rose or Sharon Moore at (919) 832-2839. The event will be held at the Sheraton-Crabtree Hotel in Raleigh on Highway 70 West on Friday, September 25th beginning at 6:30 p.m. The ticket price includes dinner, three speakers, and a copy of the Tenth Anniversary Report.