NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.

NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 21, 1987

N.C. CENTER REPORTS PORK BARREL PROCESS FAIRER NOW, BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN

Until a few years ago, pork barrel appropriations in the N.C. General Assembly -- those financial goodies legislators send back to their home districts -- went exclusively to a few legislative leaders. Now all that has changed, and the pork barrel process is much fairer than it ever was, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research.

"Pork barrel spending has remained relatively stable as a portion of the state budget," says Jack Betts, Associate Editor of North Carolina Insight. "But the pork barrel process has gone through several major reforms. It is now fairer, more open, and more deliberate within the legislative system."

"Despite these reforms," continued Betts, "the pork barrel curing process is not quite complete. The most obvious inequities have been addressed -- the hidden benefactors, the blatant partisanship. Now the legislature needs to deal with one more meaty question: Should the state be funding purely local projects with state pork barrel money?"

Today, the Center released an analysis of the pork barrel process over the last 10 years. The study appears in North Carolina Insight, the Center's quarterly magazine, in an article by Seth Effron, Raleigh correspondent for Greensboro News & Record. Insight concludes that the changes in the pork barrel process over the last decade have been positive ones. Those changes include the following:

* A new bill deadline process -- In 1987, all pork barrel bills had to be introduced by May 29. This process discloses who is sponsoring which pork barrel bills. It also gives the public and the news media more time to examine each request, because several months elapse between the bill filing deadline and passage of the omnibus pork barrel legislation. This is an improvement over the old Jack-In-The-Box process, where pork barrel bills popped up one day and were quickly ratified into law a few days later.

* The process is fairer -- More members get pork barrel money now, not just the Democratic leadership. Republicans were frozen out of the process entirely before 1985. GOP legislators got significantly less than Democrats in 1985 and 1986, but in 1987 Republicans began receiving the same amounts.

* More equity among counties -- Distribution of funds among all 100 counties is fairer than before, even though a few counties get much more money than others.

* Fewer constituionally questionable projects -- Reviews by both the Governor and the State Auditor show that there's relatively little monkey business when it comes to pork barrel spending. Usually, the projects are at least arguably for public purposes.

P O BOX 430 RALEIGH, N C 27602 (919) 832-2839

How Much Pork?

From 1983 to 1985, pork barrel spending grew from $5 million a year to about $9 million. After a year of intense criticism that included a walkout by House Republicans during the closing days of the 1985 session, pork barrel spending was trimmed back to $5.8 million in the 1986 short session. However, it rose again to $7.9 million in the 1987 regular session.

Still, this spending does not represent a major portion of the state budget. In 1983 and 1987, the pork barrel bill amounted to 0.13 percent -- less than two tenths of 1 percent -- of the total state budget, excluding federal funds and the highway fund.

Since 1983, the number of individual projects in pork barrel bills has grown from 261 to as high as 1,442 in the 1985 session and 1,183 in the 1987 session. In 1983, each senator and representative got an average of $50,000 to spend in their districts; in 1987, senators got $70,000, while representatives received $40,000, *Insight* reports.

Past Criticisms of Pork Barrel

Gov. James G. Martin has complained that pork barrel is little more than a way for the legislature's Democratic leadership "to discipline Democratic legislators to vote the way it tells them to vote." Other Republican leaders agree. "It's tied in with the carrot and stick," says Rep. Margaret Keesee-Forrester (R-Guilford), who characterizes the Democratic leadership style this way: "'If you follow my directions as I am the leader of this body..., then you will be rewarded for being good and not being a rabble-rouser and making it difficult for us.'"

But Rep. William T. Watkins (D-Granville), one of those leaders who heads the Appropriations Expansion Budget Committee, says the pork barrel is a way for legislators to show that state government is in touch with local needs. "It lets local people know state government cares about them," says Watkins. "It really does cause people to appreciate their state government and participate in state government."

Lt. Gov. Robert B. Jordan, who presides over the state Senate, is concerned that using state tax dollars to pay for traditionally, and typically local needs, entices local governments and non-public agencies to become overly dependent on state government. Pork barrel money is used for everything from band uniforms or lights for the local football stadium to money that supports local turkey, collard, or rhododendron festivals or historic restoration projects. Those projects, says Jordan, should be supported locally. But as a practical matter, Jordan says he realizes the General Assembly isn't about to give it up, even though it's a questionable practice.

The UNC Institute of Government's Director, John Sanders, points out that widely distributed pork barrel is a recent phenomenon. "Just 10 years ago," Sanders says, "only a legislative leader could get a special appropriation for a state institution or project in his district -- a university building or historic site, for example. But no one would have dreamed that every legislator could ask for this sort of 'free money' to take back home for a public project of a purely local nature. A helpful line could easily be drawn: Is this the sort of benefit that should be provided for all county residents or all municipal residents of this state?"

Pork barrel spending by the legislature has raised some questions about whether tax money is being spent for public purposes, as required by Article 5, Section 2 of the state constitution. A 1985 Martin Administration review of more than 1,400 items found only three it questioned. Two involved organizations which didn't exist, and one was judged to be unconstitutional under the public purpose test. A State Auditor's review in early 1987 found no additional examples of improper funding. Among the 1985 allocations of pork barrel spending, for example, were $2,500 for the Gladiator Boxing Club in Winston-Salem, $2,000 for the Burlington Boys Choir, $475,000 for the Discovery Place Museum in Charlotte, and $35,000 for the Mt. Hebron Masonic Lodge in Wilson.

Local Pork vs. Statewide Pork

Those are just a few of the pork barrel items that appear in the regular pork barrel bill. But pork barrel funds can appear in more than one type of bill. Some show up in capital spending bills, and may include funds for horse arenas or college campus buildings. Others may show up in bills for statewide special projects, and still others may appear in the main operating budget bill. For instance, in 1986, the pork barrel bill appropriated $5.8 million for local projects. But when a special appropriations bill for statewide projects emerged, it held $24 million worth of state spending for certain types of capital projects -- the university system, community colleges, and Department of Agriculture facilities -- located within the home districts of legislative leaders. Legislative leaders strongly objected to characterizing those projects as pork barrel, saying they were projects for state institutions with a statewide purpose.

Future Issues

Though the Center praised the legislature for the recent progress made in the pork barrel process, it says the legislature still has some questions to debate as the pork barrel process continues to evolve.

-- Just because a project benefits citizens in a single county, should the state fund it? Or would it be better public policy to leave funding of local projects to local private groups or to county commissioners?

-- Should the legislature provide a better way to give credit -- or blame -- to those who have successfully sponsored pork barrel legislation? Under the current system, it's no problem to determine who initially sponsored most pork barrel requests, but it's difficult sometimes to tell what happened to a piece of legislation at the end of a legislative session. Usually a pork barrel bill will show up as having been "postponed indefinitely" on the legislature's bill status system when in fact it was ratified as part of the omnibus pork barrel bill. The legislative records, says the Center, should accurately reflect what happens to each pork barrel request. With the General Assembly's sophisticated new computer system, this additional measure of accountability could easily be provided to tell the public exactly what ratified bill contains a pork request and to give credit where credit is due.

-- But perhaps the toughest question, says the Center, is this: Has the rise of the pork system contributed to making the N.C. General Assembly more parochial, taking it even beyond the age-old, rural-urban debate and finally pitting one locality against the next locality in the quest for the pork barrel? And how might such festering divisions affect future operations of the General Assembly?

North Carolina Insight magazine is published by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. The Center is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization created to examine state government policies and practices. The Center is supported in part by grants from the Z. Smith Reynolds and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundations, both in Winston-Salem. Other funding comes from 105 corporate contributors and 600 individual and organizational members. In addition to its quarterly magazine, the Center also publishes book-length research reports. Past studies have been issued on all the boards and commissions in state government, for-profit hospitals, and state prison policy.

* * * * *

Copies of the issue of North Carolina Insight magazine containing the research on pork barrel spending are available for $6.00 plus $1.00 postage from the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602 or call (919) 832-2839.

For more information, call Jack Betts, at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, at (919) 832-2839 or Seth Effron, Greensboro News & Record, at (919) 832-5549.

Table 1. Pork Barrel Spending, 1983-1987

Year	Total Pork Barrel Spending	Total State Budget	% of State Budget That Is Pork	Number of Pork Barrel Projects	Share Per N.C. Senator	Share per N.C. Representative
1983	$5.0 million	$3.8 billion*	0.13%	261	$50,000	$50,000
		$6.7 billion#	0.07%			
1984	$7.8 million	$4.3 billion*	0.18%	308	$80,000	$40,000
		$7.4 billion#	0.10%			
1985	$9.0 million	$4.9 billion*	0.18%	1,442	$100,000	$50,000
		$8.4 billion#	0.10%			
1986	$5.8 million	$5.2 billion*	0.11%	631	$35,000	$35,000
		$8.9 billion#	0.06%			
1987	$7.9 million	$5.9 billion*	0.13%	1,183	$70,000	$40,000
		$9.9 billion#	0.07%			

*General Fund budget only
#Total state budget, including federal funds

Table 2. Per Capita Pork Barrel Spending, 1983-1986, by County

County	Per Capita Pork Barrel Spending	Rank	County	Per Capita Pork Barrel Spending	Rank
Alamance	$3.80	65	Johnston	5.46	35
Alexander	.58	100	Jones	25.24	1
Alleghany	9.31	14	Lee	8.24	20
Anson	3.45	74 (tie)	Lenoir	4.51	49
Ashe	3.07	78	Lincoln	2.45	86
Avery	1.87	94	Macon	1.99	91
Beaufort	4.20	59	Madison	13.22	4
Bertie	8.78	17	Martin	2.98	80
Bladen	7.45	23	McDowell	5.32	38
Brunswick	3.53	69	Mecklenburg	4.38	54
Buncombe	5.08	41	Mitchell	1.73	95
Burke	5.43	36	Montgomery	4.83	43
Cabarrus	3.78	66	Moore	4.26	57 (tie)
Caldwell	1.03	98	Nash	5.73	32
Camden	9.77	12	New Hanover	2.55	85
Carteret	6.67	26	Northampton	2.97	81
Caswell	6.57	27	Onslow	3.50	71 (tie)
Catawba	2.03	89	Orange	4.66	46
Chatham	8.35	19	Pamlico	7.02	24
Cherokee	4.31	56	Pasquotank	1.41	96
Chowan	8.04	22	Pender	3.82	64
Clay	13.69	2	Perquimans	9.17	15
Cleveland	4.39	53	Person	4.94	42
Columbus	6.41	29	Pitt	10.24	9
Craven	3.45	74 (tie)	Polk	7.01	25
Cumberland	4.55	48	Randolph	1.91	93
Currituck	3.61	67 (tie)	Richmond	5.59	34
Dare	12.48	6	Robeson	5.76	31
Davidson	2.00	90	Rockingham	5.33	37
Davie	3.86	63	Rowan	3.97	62
Duplin	4.26	57 (tie)	Rutherford	3.50	71 (tie)
Durham	5.31	39	Sampson	4.50	50
Edgecombe	3.21	76	Scotland	2.41	87
Forsyth	4.76	45	Stanly	4.35	55
Franklin	8.36	18	Stokes	2.65	84
Gaston	4.45	51 (tie)	Surry	4.17	61
Gates	8.79	16	Swain	13.57	3
Graham	12.62	5	Transylvania	6.05	30
Granville	5.15	40	Tyrrell	1.01	99
Greene	10.11	10	Union	2.87	82
Guilford	3.61	67 (tie)	Vance	4.19	60
Halifax	4.65	47	Wake	6.51	28
Harnett	3.46	73	Warren	11.57	7
Haywood	4.45	51 (tie)	Washington	8.10	21
Henderson	1.26	97	Watauga	2.68	83
Hertford	9.78	11	Wayne	4.80	44
Hoke	9.71	13	Wilkes	1.96	92
Hyde	10.56	8	Wilson	3.57	70
Iredell	2.05	88	Yadkin	3.16	77
Jackson	3.02	79	Yancey	5.69	33

Statewide Average $ 4.36

Source: Greensboro News & Record