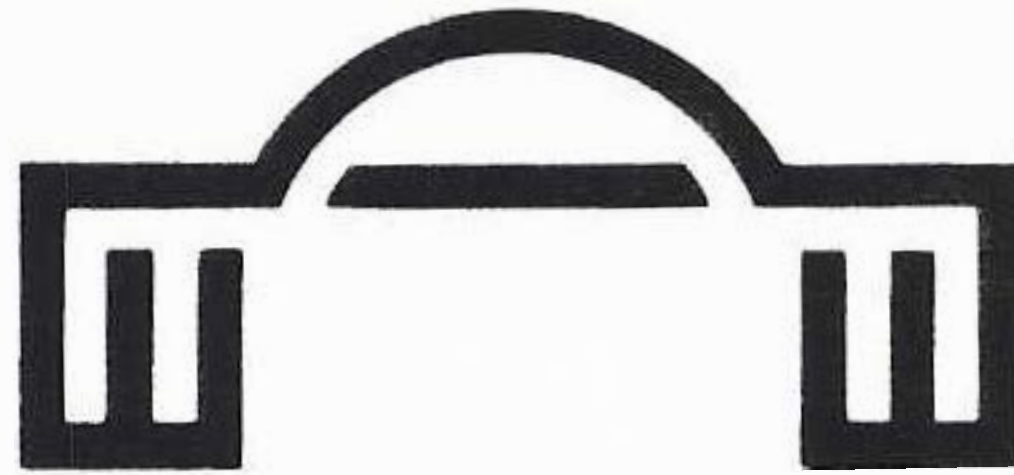




NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.

News Release

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casts Tuesday and
Wednesday morning papers)

N.C. CENTER SAYS NORTH CAROLINA NOW A TWO-PARTY STATE
WITH IMPORTANT POLICY CONSEQUENCES

In the past 20 years, North Carolina politics has undergone a revolution that has produced startling gains for the Republican Party, with important policy consequences for citizens, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research.

In a special research report produced for a unique joint presentation with the University of North Carolina Center for Public Television, the Center for Public Policy Research says there is evidence that the state has developed a two-party political system "in theory and in fact," and points to recent gains by the state Republican Party as evidence of this transformation.

"North Carolina has been transformed from near-total domination by the Democratic Party to a state with a new political balance," says one of the report's authors, Jack Betts. "Democrats still dominate, but Republicans regularly win the big elections, and lately, they've begun winning more of the little ones, too. The evidence abounds, and each ensuing election gives further proof of the realignment of political parties."

The Center's special report, released today, serves as the research base for a joint production with the UNC Center for Public Television. Taped live at Raleigh's Theater in the Park, the production will air on WUNC network stations at 8 p.m. Wednesday, December 2. Thad Beyle, a UNC-CH professor of political science and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the N.C. Center, will lead a discussion by a panel of six prominent North Carolinians. The panelists include state Rep. Margaret Keesee-Forrester (R-Guilford); former N.C. Secretary of Natural Resources and Community Development Howard N. Lee of Chapel Hill; former Republican state Sen. Hamilton Horton of Winston-Salem; former Democratic legislator and former N.C. Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Herbert Hyde of Asheville; Greensboro News & Record Editorial Page Editor John Alexander; and UNC-CH Political Science Professor Merle Black.

The Center's research shows substantial evidence of a two-party system. The GOP candidate for President has carried the state in every contest but one since 1968, as well as two races for governor and four races for U.S. Senator. In all, the Republican Party has won nine of the 14 major statewide races since 1968 -- a winning percentage of 64 percent.

But the evidence goes deeper than that. Republicans hold ^{three}~~four~~ of the state's 11 congressional seats, held both Senate seats from 1980 to 1986, hold about 30 percent of the seats in the General Assembly, and have a majority on nearly 30 percent of the county Boards of Commissioners. How could this come about in a state

that long was the province of Democrats? The answer lies in voter registration and demographics, says the Center.

-- While Democratic registration grew by 37 percent from 1966-86, Republican registration was growing nearly four times as fast -- by 143 percent. When the period began, Democrats had nearly a 4-1 edge in registration; by the last election in 1986, it was about 2.5:1. The number of unaffiliated voters also grew rapidly in this period. About half the new registrants are Democrats, while the other half are Republicans or unaffiliated. Twenty years ago, 80 percent of new voters were Democrats.

-- The evidence shows that while Republican strength is growing across the board, it is soaring in the state's most populous areas. In Wake County, Democrats grew by 82 percent, but Republicans grew by 707 percent; in Guilford, Democrats grew by nearly 42 percent, Republicans by 149 percent; in Forsyth, Democrats grew by 26 percent, Republicans by 134 percent.

-- On the local level, Republican strength is beginning to grow rapidly, too. In 1974, for instance, only 80 of the state's 477 county commissioners were Republican. By 1986, the number had grown by 76 percent, to 141. What's more, in 1987, Republicans held a majority on 29 county Boards of Commissioners -- more than double the number they controlled in 1974. And the party is making modest gains in other offices. The GOP now counts among its members 13 of the state's Registers of Deeds, 14 of the Clerks of Court, and 19 of the Sheriffs.

-- And in terms of county voting, what once was a solidly Democratic state has become a solidly Republican state in presidential elections. In the period 1968-1980, only 10 North Carolina counties voted consistently Democratic in presidential elections; 40 counties -- four times as many -- voted consistently Republican; the rest had mixed voting records.

David T. Flaherty, former chairman of the N.C. Republican Party and now Governor Martin's Secretary of Human Resources, says the Democratic Party's stronghold on state politics still has an effect. "I do not feel that it is long gone," says Flaherty. "For example, unfortunately, the Republican membership in the General Assembly does not control the outcomes in that body. Also, the judicial system is practically void of Republican judges."

And, says Flaherty, further development of GOP strength, particularly at the local level, may come slowly. "Much of the infrastructure of North Carolina politics is controlled, to some extent, by media, 'old money in a town,' and the courthouse presence. These are difficult odds to overcome in many cities and counties in North Carolina. Resources of this type have often inhibited the ability of GOP candidate recruitment. For example, if a candidate for city council does not have the financial base that his long-time Democrat opponent has received for many years, and he knows he cannot count on favorable press, it can be discouraging. Also, it is difficult to encourage attorneys to run for judicial office for fear that they may lose and face their opponent across the bench. Simply said, in many towns the heritage of money and power is still held by the Democrats."

Ken Eudy, executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party, believes the record is still developing on the two-party system. "I don't think we have enough history and precedent yet to say there's a realignment," says Eudy. "In fact, North Carolina may be going to a de-alignment, where people don't have a particular allegiance to one party or another."

While many new voters have registered as Republican, Eudy says, it may not be due to loyalty to that party. "Young people particularly are performance-

oriented," says Eudy. "They may have been drawn to the Republican party originally by Ronald Reagan, but we don't know if they will stay.... They are drawn to the top of the ticket, and it will be interesting to see how that shakes out over the next 12 years."

Some skeptics say it makes little difference who's in office, particularly in a state that has a Republican governor without veto power facing a heavily Democratic legislature. But the Center's research shows there are policy differences between Democratic and Republican Administrations. In Republican administrations:

-- There is more of an emphasis on "workfare" programs designed to give welfare recipients job skills in order to reduce the number of citizens on welfare. During Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt's eight-year term, the state had workfare programs in only eight counties. But during the first three years of Gov. Jim Martin's term, the state added workfare programs in 20 more counties, with 15 additional county programs to be added in fiscal year 1987-88.

-- Fewer state-paid abortions are performed. During Hunt's terms, the number of state-paid abortions averaged 5,371 per year; under Martin, the number has dropped to 3,662 state-paid abortions.

-- State parks appear to get more funding. Under Gov. Jim Hunt, state parks spending -- including land acquisition, capital improvements, and field operations -- averaged about \$3.2 million. During the administrations of Gov. Jim Holshouser and Gov. Jim Martin, the state averaged \$10.6 million in spending on parks.

-- And both Republicans and Democrats tinker with the state's road building program in various ways. While Democrat Hunt was in office, for instance, roadwork was speeded up on U.S. 264 from Raleigh to Wilson, Hunt's hometown. While Holshouser was in office, work was advanced on U.S. 321 and U.S. 421 near Boone, Holshouser's hometown. However, the Center's research shows that because of the time-consuming nature of highway building projects, it's rare that a governor can begin and finish a new project during his own term in office. At most, governors seem able to move road projects up on the priority list. There also appears to be less manipulation of road budgets than in the years prior to 1973 before the state Board of Transportation was created to oversee highway programs.

These are just some indications of the policy differences that have occurred when Democrats or Republicans are in office. But as the state continues its political evolution, there is strong evidence that North Carolina is developing a two-party political system, says the Center.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, 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 108 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.

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Copies of the report on "The Growth of the Two-Party System in North Carolina," authored by Jack Betts and Center intern Vanessa Goodman, are available for \$9.00 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.