



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

NEWS RELEASE

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For Release on Tuesday, June 4, 1991:

May be broadcast Tuesday a.m. and may appear in
Tuesday a.m. and p.m. newspapers.

Legislative Demographics Shift as Number of White Male Democrats Declines

In a break with a decades-old pattern, white male Democrats no longer hold a majority of seats in the North Carolina General Assembly, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research says. White male Democrats in the 1991-92 session number 82, or 48 percent, of the total House and Senate membership of 170, the Center says in its new guide to the legislature.

The number of white male Democrats first slipped below 50 percent in 1989, when 80 members of the House and Senate, or 47 percent, were white male Democrats. While white male Democrats still hold a plurality of the seats -- more than any other category of members -- their numbers have declined dramatically over the past 20 years.

"Back in 1971, white male Democrats held a total of 79 percent of the seats in the legislature -- 43 out of 50 seats in the Senate and 92 of 120 seats in the House," says Kim Kebschull, a policy analyst at the Center and author of the guide. "In the 1971 Senate, there were only white males -- not a single female or minority senator. And in 1971, the House had only a slightly more diverse membership, with two black and two female Democrats along with the white male Republicans." Currently, white male Democrats comprise 46 percent of the House membership, at 55 members, while they have remained in a majority at 54 percent (27 members) in the Senate.

This information about trends in legislative demographics can be found in the Center's latest publication, Article II: A Guide to the 1991-92 N.C. Legislature. The book -- which is the largest and most complete guide to the N.C. legislature published -- contains pictures, biographical and occupational information, committee assignments, and voting records on all 170 members of the state House and Senate.

Concurrent with the 20-year trend in the declining numbers of white male Democratic legislators is a move towards greater diversity in membership among other groups. "The numbers of women legislators of both parties, as well as the numbers of black male and female Democrats and white male Republicans, have shown impressive increases over the years," says Kebschull.

Some analysts say there's far more involved than just the appearance of a balanced legislature. "Our whole system is based on representation of all citizens," says former Rep. Sharon Thompson of Durham, a spokesperson for Women Elect, a group dedicated to electing more women legislators. When legislative bodies fail to represent all segments of the population, the system does not function well, she says, and that affects not only debate but also production

of legislation. A case in point, she says, occurred in the 1987-88 General Assembly. The 24 women legislators -- which included liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans -- agreed unanimously to support a marital rape bill that had run into trouble with conservative male legislators and was headed for the scrap heap. The bill, which changed North Carolina law on spousal rape, was approved after a concerted effort by females in the General Assembly. "The marital rape bill would not have passed without women legislators," Thompson notes.

While the number of white male Republicans in the House is down from 37 in 1989 to 32 in 1991, other demographic characteristics have either increased or remained relatively stable. The total number of blacks in the legislature is 19, or 11 percent of total membership -- the highest level since the turn of the century. The total number of women remained stable at 25, or 15 percent of the membership. The first Native American was elected to the House since 1981; there have been no Native American members in the Senate.

CHANGES IN LEGISLATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS, 1971 vs. 1991

1971

<u>Category</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>House</u>	<u>Total</u>
White male Democrats	43 (86%)	92 (77%)	135 (79%)
Black male Democrats	0	2 (2%)	2 (1%)
White female Democrats	0	2 (2%)	2 (1%)
Black female Democrats	0	0	0
White male Republicans	7 (14%)	24 (20%)	31 (18%)
Black male Republicans	0	0	0
White female Republicans	0	0	0
Black female Republicans	0	0	0

1991

<u>Category</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>House</u>	<u>Total</u>
White male Democrats	27 (54%)	55 (46%)	82 (48%)
Black male Democrats	5 (10%)	13 (11%)	18 (11%)
White female Democrats	4 (8%)	11 (9%)	15 (9%)
Black female Democrats	0	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
White male Republicans	13 (26%)	32 (27%)	45 (26%)
Black male Republicans	0	0	0
White female Republicans	1 (2%)	7 (6%)	8 (5%)
Black female Republicans	0	0	0

The average ages of General Assembly members rose over the last decade. The average age in the House is 57, up from 49 in 1971; the average age in the Senate is 58, up from 51 in 1971. As the average age increased, the number of retirees also rose in the House, from 22 in 1989 to 28 in 1991. The number in the Senate remained stable at six members. "Older legislators and retirees are a much larger proportion of the membership than they were 20 years ago," says Kebschull. "In 1971, only four Senators and seven House members considered themselves retired. Now retirees are almost 20 percent of the entire membership."

Changes in occupational categories in the House were greater than in the Senate. The total number of educators -- both current and former -- nearly doubled, from 10 in 1989 to 19 in 1991. "The educators come from a wide range of backgrounds," says Kebschull. "There are college professors, such as Rep. Paul Luebke (D-Durham); former administrators and superintendents, like Rep. William Lewis (R-Wilson) and Sen. Marvin Ward (D-Forsyth); and both public and private school teachers, including Rep. Maggie Jeffus (D-Guilford) and Rep. Mike Decker (R-Forsyth). Their expertise and judgment might be especially useful in sessions where education issues are at the forefront."

The number of farmers, health care workers, insurance agents, and realtors also increased, while the number of members involved in business and sales and law decreased. Today, only 49 of the legislators say they are in business or sales, compared with 52 in the last session and 66 in 1971.

"The reason for the decline is obviously the length of sessions and the increasing amount of time that legislators have to devote to their jobs," says Phil Kirk, executive director of N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry. "I know of examples where business people have been asked to consider running, but the lack of time is the first excuse that they give. The impact [of the current decline of the number of business people in the legislature] is that there are fewer and fewer legislators who understand the business community from firsthand experience. This could have an effect on tax matters, on employer-employee relations issues, and also on environmental issues."

The number of lawyers showed an even larger decrease, from 45 in 1989 to 35 in 1991. This continues a long decline over the past 20 years. In 1971, 68 members, or 40 percent, of the General Assembly were lawyers, compared with only 35 members -- 21 percent -- currently.

"The number of lawyers is down tremendously," notes House Speaker Daniel T. Blue, Jr. (D-Wake). "What that does is force the members to rely on the [legislative] staff more. The problem [with not having more lawyer-legislators] is that you don't bring broad, day-to-day legal experience to these [public policy] questions. Law experience is so diverse, and when you temper legal expertise with legislative expertise and years of practice, you get a lot of free legal advice that cannot be replaced."

Legislative turnover rates remained relatively low compared with rates 20 years ago. In 1971, the turnover ratio in both the Senate and House was 36 percent. The ratios fluctuated over the ensuing years, with highs of 42 percent turnover in the Senate in 1975 and in the House in 1973. However, says Kebschull, the turnover ratio for the 1991 General Assembly is 16 percent.

This is the eighth edition of Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature. The Center began publishing the handy pocket-sized guides during the 1977-78 General Assembly.

"We publish the guide to provide information to the citizens of North Carolina about their elected representatives," says Kebschull. "It is the best of the legislative directories available because it is the only one which contains three measures of legislators' performance -- votes on 16 selected bills from the past session, a "bill success ratio" which records how many bills each member sponsored and how many passed, and past rankings of legislators' effectiveness if they've served in prior sessions."

The effectiveness rankings are the most publicized feature of the guide. At the end of each of the long legislative sessions, held in odd-numbered years, the Center surveys the legislators themselves, registered lobbyists, and capital news correspondents. Respondents are asked to rate the effectiveness of individual legislators. The Center then compiles the rankings and publishes the scores. "The rankings were an evaluation of legislators by their peers and by people who saw them working every day," explains Kebschull. The rankings contained in this edition of Article II were originally released in April 1990. Rankings for members of the 1991-92 General Assembly will be released in April 1992.

The 246-page guide includes the following information on each legislator:

- business and home addresses and phone numbers,
- office room number and phone number at the legislature,
- party affiliation, district number, and counties represented,
- seat number,
- number of terms served,
- committee assignments,
- bills introduced in the previous session,
- birth date,
- occupation and education, and
- past effectiveness rankings (1979-1989).

The guide also includes House and Senate district maps, complete committee listings, and trends in how the demographics of the legislature have changed since 1973.

In addition to information on the legislators, the guide also contains rankings by the legislators, registered lobbyists, and capital news correspondents of the 40 most influential lobbyists in the 1989-90 session. Historically, former legislators who turn to lobbying as part of their law practices have been rated among the most influential.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation created to study public policy issues facing North Carolina and evaluate state government programs. 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 six other private foundations, 120 corporate contributors and more than 600 individual and organizational members. In addition to publishing Article II, the Center has conducted studies on campaign finance, mountain-area land use and management, disparities in funding among rich and poor school districts in North Carolina, and a comparison of the formal powers of all 50 state governors.

Article II: A Guide to the 1991-92 N.C. Legislature is available for \$20.00, plus \$1.00 tax, plus \$1.50 postage and handling from the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research at P.O. Box 430, 5 W. Hargett Street, Suite 701, Raleigh, NC 27602 (919) 832-2839. It is a handy reference book for news reporters, lobbyists, and citizens interested in the legislature.

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For more information, call Kim Kebschull, policy analyst at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, at (919) 832-2839.

Table 2. Trends in Legislative Demographics

Category	Year and Number of Members per Category										
	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991
Blacks											
Senate	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	5
House	2	3	4	4	3	3	11	13	13	13	14
Total number	2	3	6	6	4	4	12	16	16	17	19
Total percent	1%	2%	4%	4%	3%	3%	7%	9%	9%	10%	11%
Women											
Senate	0	1	2	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	5
House	2	8	13	19	17	19	19	16	20	21	20
Total number	2	9	15	23	22	22	24	20	24	25	25
Total percent	1%	5%	9%	14%	13%	13%	14%	12%	14%	15%	15%
Indians											
Senate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
House	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total number	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total percent	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Democrats											
Senate	43	35	49	46	45	40	44	38	40	37	36
House	96	85	111	114	105	96	102	82	84	74	81
Total number	139	120	160	160	150	136	146	120	124	111	117
Total percent	82%	71%	94%	94%	88%	80%	86%	71%	73%	65%	69%
Republicans											
Senate	7	15	1	4	5	10	6	12	10	13	14
House	24	35	9	6	15	24	18	38	36	46	39
Total number	31	50	10	10	20	34	24	50	46	59	53
Total percent	18%	29%	6%	6%	12%	20%	14%	29%	27%	35%	31%
Turnover Ratios											
Senate (New Members Elected)											
Number	18	15	21	11	7	8	9	18	6	5	8
Percent	36%	30%	42%	22%	14%	16%	18%	36%	12%	10%	16%
House (New Members Elected)											
Number	43	50	49	24	30	33	31	39	25	25	21
Percent	36%	42%	41%	20%	25%	28%	26%	33%	21%	21%	18%

(Note: If a Senator had served in the House during the immediate past session, he or she is not considered a new member. If a member had served in either chamber during sessions prior to the immediate past session, however, he or she is considered a new member.)

**This research was drawn largely from editions of the North Carolina Manual, and does not reflect members who first reached the General Assembly by appointment to legislative vacancies caused by death or resignations.*

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Trends in Legislators' Occupations

Occupation	Year and Number of Members per Category										
	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991
Senate											
Banking	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	1
Business and sales	17	13	14	18	13	20	19	21	19	15	16
Construction and											
contracting	1	0	0	0	2	3	3	2	1	4	3
Education	1	1	3	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	4
Farming	4	3	2	4	3	5	6	6	6	5	6
Health care	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Homemaker	0	1	1	0	2	0	4	2	0	1	0
Insurance	2	5	5	5	6	7	6	4	4	2	1
Law	22	19	15	14	13	10	14	17	21	20	17
Manufacturing	2	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	0	0	0
Minister	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Real estate	1	2	5	5	7	12	8	8	6	6	6
Retired	4	2	2	0	3	4	6	6	4	6	6
House of Representatives											
Banking	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	0	0	0
Business and sales	49	28	35	41	37	43	45	45	43	37	33
Construction and											
contracting	2	0	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	2
Education	6	11	16	16	10	11	10	15	12	7	15
Farming	17	14	20	22	22	18	24	16	12	8	11
Health care	0	2	3	3	6	3	5	4	4	4	7
Homemaker	1	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3
Insurance	7	7	12	11	13	10	6	10	10	8	12
Law	46	37	36	26	25	26	26	24	23	25	18
Manufacturing	3	3	1	0	4	2	2	2	0	0	0
Minister	3	3	1	1	0	1	3	7	4	4	2
Real estate	6	5	9	7	10	15	19	20	15	17	20
Retired	7	4	5	8	6	15	12	13	17	22	28

(Note: Some legislators list more than one occupation; thus, the total number of occupations may be higher than the actual number of members.)