



FROM THE CENTER OUT

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

September-October 1995

School Choice, N.C. Railroad Featured in September *Insight*

The latest edition of *Insight* hit member mailboxes in September, featuring genuine student art on a school-bus yellow cover. A pro/con on school choice was the primary theme of this issue, which also included an article on the North Carolina Railroad. It was this latter topic that caught the attention of the state's news media, at last count generating 23 articles and five editorials or columns in newspapers across the state. At least one major daily, *The Charlotte Observer*, endorsed the Center's recommendation that the state buy out the private shareholders in the 317-mile North Carolina Railroad. "The Center's study is compelling," opined the *Observer*. "Buying out private stockholders, using revenue from the new lease to finance it, is a solution worth pursuing. It's time to get the train on the track." School choice was the choice of North Carolina broadcasters. The Center's pro-con discussion on this topic was featured both on public television (WUNC-TV) and public radio (WUNC-FM of Chapel Hill).

Next Step: Local Government Theme Issue

All aboard for the next edition of *North Carolina Insight*. It's a theme issue that takes a detailed look at some of the issues troubling local government officials. We'll start our journey at mandate station (looking at mandates levied on local governments by federal and state governments) and then try not to get sidetracked as we discuss which level of government should be doing what. We'll also look at increasing service demands at the local level and whether there is a need to supplement the property tax as a local revenue source. It's an excursion you won't want to miss, whether you're a local government official, a constituent, or both.

Third Edition of *N.C. Focus* to be Published In 1996

If you attended a public school or college in North Carolina, you know how few textbooks there are on

North Carolina government and politics. Most are on state and local government in general. In 1996, the Center will publish the third edition of *N.C. Focus* — a unique anthology on state government, politics and public policy — for use in college and university classes in state and local government and in social studies classes in North Carolina. This project is made possible by the generous support of The Cannon Foundation in Concord, North Carolina. In an effort to make this textbook user-friendly, interesting to professors and students, and useful for Center members, we organized an advisory committee to help us from start to finish with this project. The committee includes professors from public and private colleges across the state, representatives from the Department of Public Instruction, students, and Center members. The first meeting was on Friday, September 8, 1995. The committee has taken a hands-on approach, revising the table of contents so that the text includes discussion of pressing policy issues in North Carolina. They also advised us on the logistics of publishing a textbook. We really appreciate the hard work of the advisory committee. By participating, they are improving education in North Carolina by helping us create a valuable learning tool, enhancing students' and citizens' understanding of state government, and bringing our state Constitution alive for users of *N.C. Focus*.



The Center's Mission

"The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to the goals of a better-informed public and more effective, accountable, and responsive government."

Welcome New Members; Thanks To Our Returning Supporters

(through October 15, 1995)

New Individual Members

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Special Gifts

Special thanks to two members, **McNeill Smith** and **Albert Sawyer**, for their recent gifts of stock to the Center. Both resulted in very generous contributions to the Center's work. Thank you!

Center Members Submit Record Number of Nominations

In response to a mailing sent out in early October, we have received a record number of nominations to the Board of Directors. Thus far, Center members have nominated more than 70 candidates. The Nominating Committee will meet on November 1 with the difficult task of choosing a slate of 4 nominees to present to the full Board for approval at its December meeting. Thank you to all who participated in this important process.

WATCH FOR OUR ANNUAL
 YEAR-END GIFT APPEAL
 COMING SOON!

Center Receives Biddle Foundation Grant for Arts Study

The Center gratefully acknowledges a \$2,500 grant from **The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation** in Durham, N.C., for the Center's study of **Trends in Funding for the Arts in North Carolina**. The Center appreciates The Biddle Foundation's philanthropy and its interest in and generosity toward the arts in North Carolina.

Special Thanks to Our Corporate Contributors

(August 1- October 15, 1995)

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FIRST-EVER N.C. ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS RELEASED

In October 1988, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research called on state government to produce an "Environmental Index" that would chart progress or decline in North Carolina's air, water, soil, and other natural resources. The index, as proposed in *North Carolina Insight* magazine, would consist of a series of indicators for gauging environmental quality — similar in concept to the leading indicators used to track the health of the nation's economy. Indicators would include objective measures that could show trends in environmental quality or the condition of natural resources. They would differ from regulatory standards, which are legally defined limits for specific pollutants based on actual or perceived health and environmental effects.

On September 1, 1995, the N.C. Dept. of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources published the first set of North Carolina Environmental Indicators. The State's report notes that the Center's 1988 article generated the interest initially required to get the state to go forward in publishing the index.

Newspaper editorials heralded the report. *The Charlotte Observer* said, "The N.C. Environmental Indicators report, even with its first-time flaws, is a good start. It promises a rational way to help the public and local and state policymakers make good choices about protecting our environment. We look forward to future editions." *The News & Observer* of Raleigh editorial concluded, "The report's greatest value is that it gives a clear picture of where we are right now. Such a benchmark — a snapshot in time, if you will — enables all of us more accurately to judge what is happening to our air, land and water and to better gauge what works and what doesn't." The Center extends its congratulations to former Governor Jim Martin and Governor Jim Hunt for each administration's efforts in producing the first set of N.C. Environmental Indicators.

To order "North Carolina Environmental Indicators," call the State Center for Health and Environmental Statistics at 919-733-4728. Or write them at P.O. Box 29538, Raleigh, NC 27626.



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