

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

A voice for better government

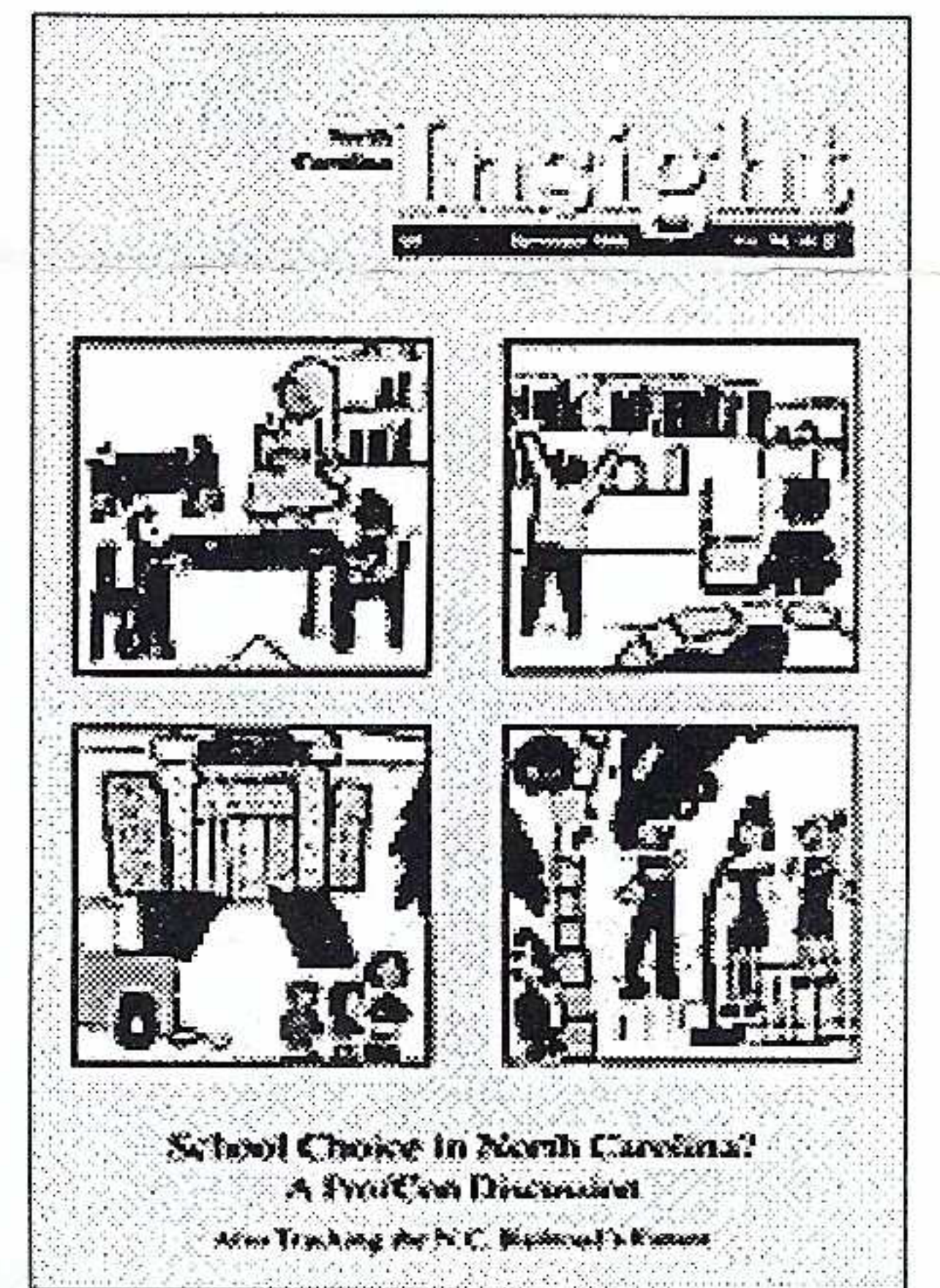
1996 Accomplishments

Affecting Policy

Public Education

Members of the State Board of Education and interested citizens have a better understanding of the pros and cons of school vouchers, school choice, and charter schools, thanks to testimony by Center staff on January 31. Following the Center's publication of pro and con articles on vouchers and school choice in *North Carolina Insight* magazine, we were invited to brief the Board and the public on these issues. The 1996 legislature voted to allow up to 100 charter schools to be formed statewide.

Students in poorer school districts are benefiting from the Center's research on the disparities in per-pupil spending in public schools across North Carolina. Following our studies of school finance in 1984, 1985, and 1989, the Center recommended a State Equalization Fund. The legislature began appropriating funds for poor school systems in 1991, and that appropriation now totals \$41.5 million.



It's a small outfit with a jaw-breaker of a name, but over its 19 years of work, the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research has advanced the commonweal scores of times and in scores of ways.... In the pantheon of non-profit organizations, the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research stands apart in one important way... the center keeps pushing one product we can never get enough of in North Carolina: The best government our tax dollars can buy.

-- The Herald-Sun, Durham



Environment

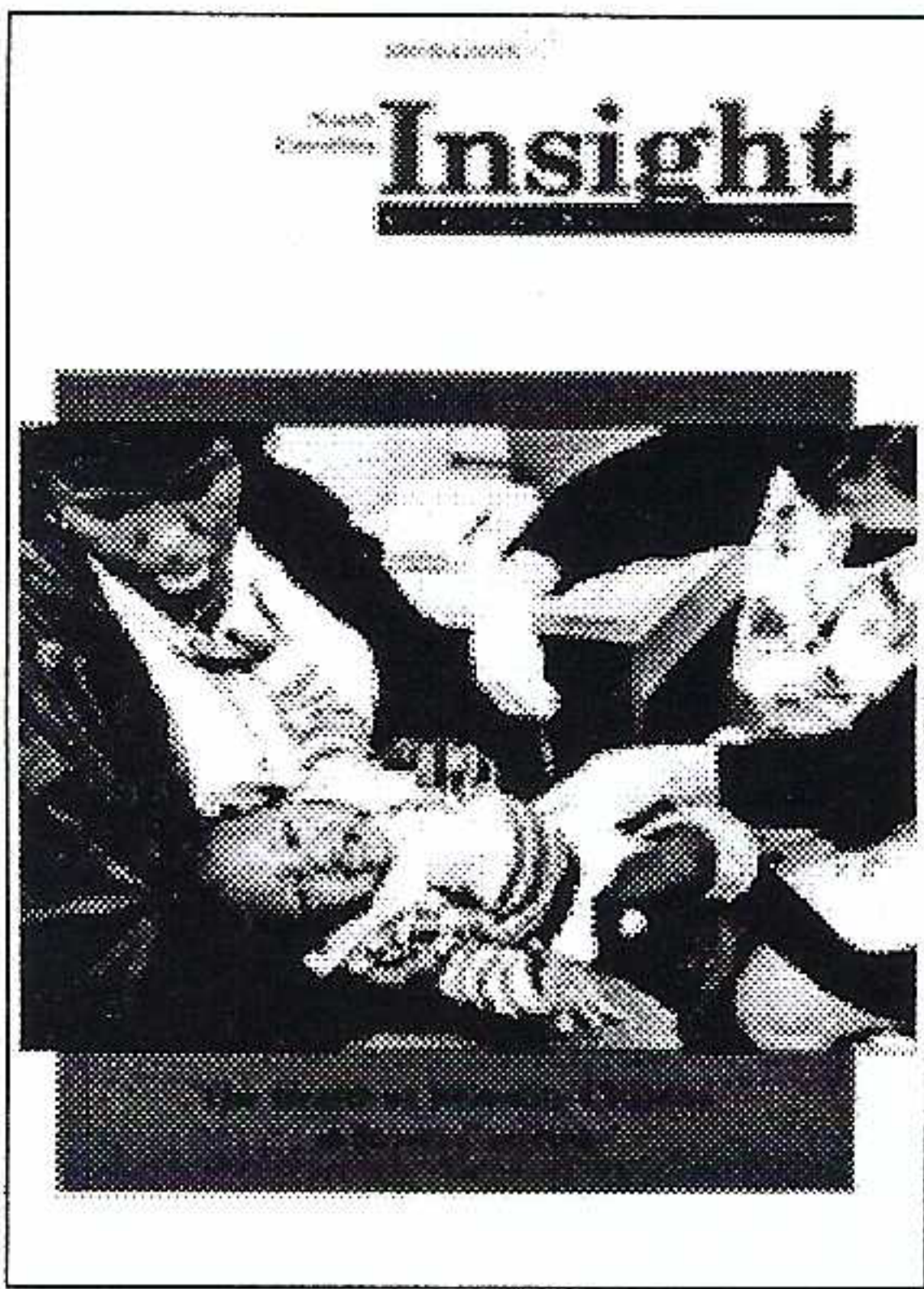
Citizens are benefiting from better pesticide policies recommended in *Insight* magazine. In 1996, the Governor appointed an environmentalist to the N.C. Pesticide Board, which helps fulfill the Center's recommendation that the Board represent a broader balance of interests. Several other Center recommendations also are being considered by the Pesticide Board and the Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, including adopting a system to assess stronger fines and penalties for repeat offenders of state pesticide law, and establishing a system for reporting pesticide-related deaths and illnesses in the state. Legislation requiring notice to neighbors before aerial spraying of pesticides, which passed the state Senate in 1995 but died in the House in 1996, is likely to be reconsidered in 1997.

I find the Center's work to be timely and insightful, both in the areas studied and the depth of research conducted.

-- Senator Fletcher L. Hartsell, Jr. (R-Cabarrus)

The research on policy issues is done in a very objective and sound manner. We are fortunate to have this Center in North Carolina.

-- Representative Martha Alexander (D-Mecklenburg)



Health Care

According to the Center's study of **The Health of Minority Citizens in North Carolina**, infant mortality rates for African Americans are more than twice as high as those for whites in our state. The study recommended expanding the maternal outreach workers program to combat this problem in all 100 counties. Research has shown maternal outreach workers are successful in reducing infant deaths, child abuse and neglect, and accident rates. An appropriation for expansion of the maternal outreach program was introduced in the 1996 legislative session but failed to pass. The Governor may include this appropriation in his 1997 budget.

Economic Development and Transportation

In 1983, the Center first examined the N.C. Railroad, which runs 317 miles from Morehead City to Charlotte. In 1996, the Center released a follow-up study of the railroad in *Insight* and recommended that the state, which owns three-fourths of the railroad stock, buy out the private shareholders who own the other fourth. This recommendation followed our research which documented the conflicts between the public and private shareholders. The recommended buyout also would further state economic development policy goals in the east and keep mass transit options open in the Piedmont. The Governor's office announced this fall that it is pursuing the buyout strategy recommended by the Center.

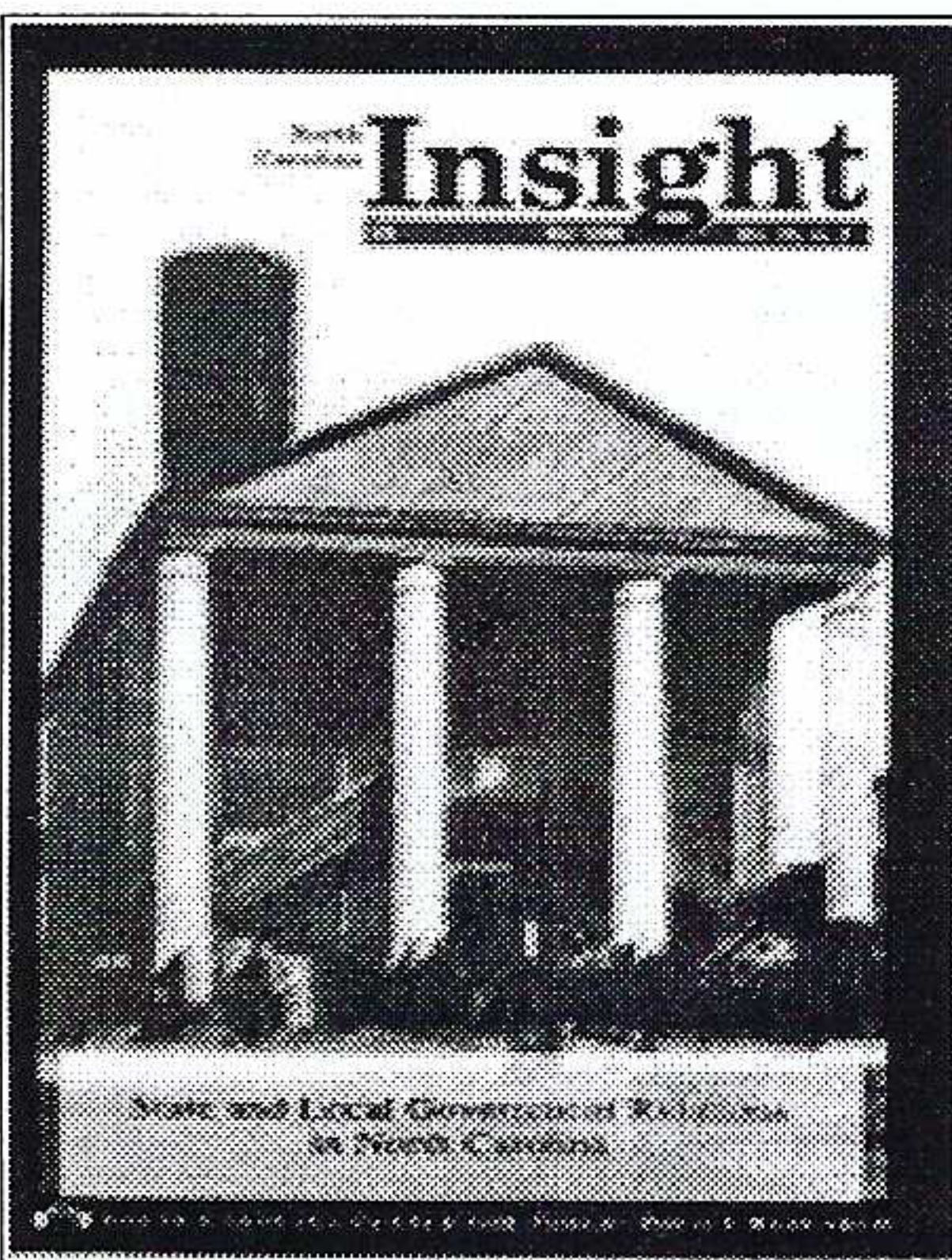
[S]tate policymakers should ponder arguments advanced a year ago by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research in favor of taking full control of the [N.C.] railroad.

-- The Charlotte Observer

Producing New Research

With the guidance of our bipartisan, 30-member, statewide Board of Directors, the Center seeks to anticipate key public policy issues facing our state and produce independent, timely research that will raise the level of public debate and make a difference in the lives of our state's citizens.

This year, citizens, artists, government officials, foundations, and corporations should have a better understanding of funding for the arts, thanks to our study of **Arts Funding in North Carolina: Trends in Public and Private Support**, published in the November 1996 issue of *Insight*. This study examines the effects of declining federal support for the arts and whether state, local, and private funds offset these cuts. We also presented the research findings to the Governor's Business Council on the Arts and Humanities.



The May 1996 issue of *Insight* on **State and Local Government Relations** gives government officials and all citizens a comprehensive guide to the changing relationship between these two levels of government. The magazine examined the extent of unfunded mandates levied by the state on local governments, the increased demand for services by citizens, and local officials' search for new sources of revenue.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research made a compelling argument Thursday that North Carolina local governments have once again reached the point where they are unable to meet local service needs.

-- Winston-Salem Journal

The organization serves as an invaluable resource tool for factual information on state and local policy issues. It does an admirable job of laying out policy positions on both sides of an issue.

-- Ron Aycock, Executive Director, N.C. Association of County Commissioners

Citizens continued to benefit from the Center's watchdog efforts in government accountability, thanks to two biennial Center reports released in 1996: *Effectiveness Rankings for Members of the N.C. General Assembly* and *The 50 Most Influential Lobbyists*.

**Legislative
Effectiveness
Rankings**

What good is a report that tells you how a bunch of strangers feel about the people you've elected to the N.C. General Assembly? Not much. And a report that tells you how the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research rates state lawmakers? Plenty.

-- Fayetteville Observer Times

**Rankings of the
Most Influential
Lobbyists**

Your booklet regarding the most influential lobbyists is fascinating, and I feel that it is valuable information. Thank you for making it available to the public.

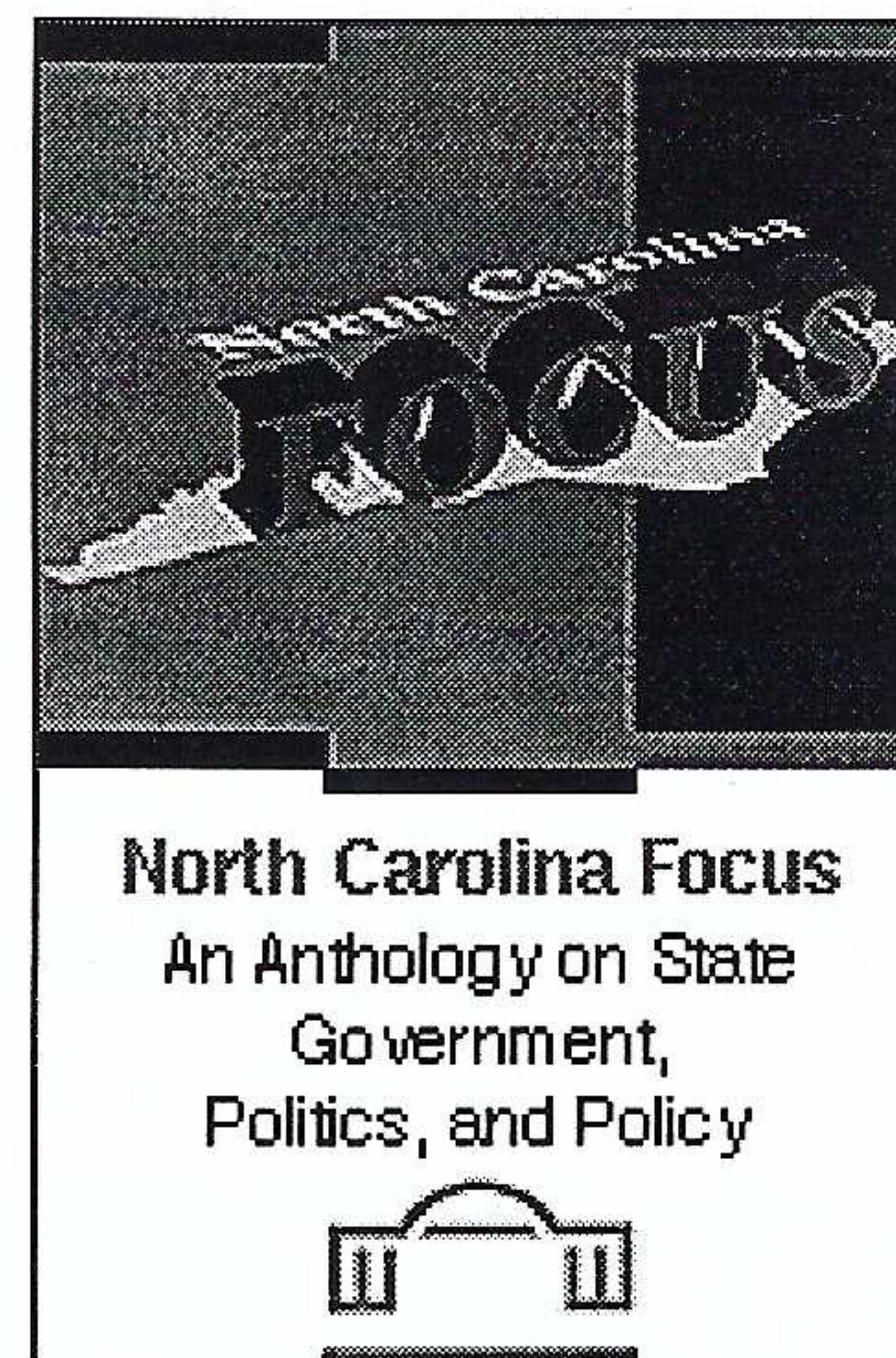
-- Mary D.B.T. Semans

Informing Citizens

Teachers, students, and citizens are benefiting from yet another Center resource, *North Carolina Focus*. The 817-page book is the Center's most comprehensive reference text ever on state government, politics, and policy issues. *Focus* is a valuable teaching tool for

North Carolina high school social studies teachers and political science teachers in public and private colleges and universities. The first half of *Focus* is organized like the North Carolina Constitution and discusses the three branches of government, the rights of citizens, and the state budget. Chapters in the second half of *Focus* are devoted to key policy issues facing North Carolina, such as economic development, education, health care, prisons, and the environment.

Voters were more informed when they went to the polls in November because the Center published pro and con essays on the three constitutional amendments on the ballot -- the gubernatorial veto, victims' rights, and alternative punishments. These essays also were provided to 400 media outlets in North Carolina.




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<http://www.nando.net/insider/nccppr>

Our home page on the World Wide Web debuted in May and includes all Center press releases, a summary of current research, and membership information. Visit us at <http://www.nando.net/insider/nccppr>.

In the second year of our partnership with WUNC-FM Radio and public radio stations in North Carolina, our six-part series on the health of minority citizens in North Carolina won a national award for public radio service reporting from the Sigma Delta Chi Society of Professional Journalists. The

minority health series also was a finalist for the Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award among small market radio stations. During 1996, WUNC aired reports on our research on state and local government relations, the North Carolina railroad, and trends in funding for the arts. Citizens throughout North Carolina also heard Center staff analyze the 1996 elections on radio through both the 90-station, commercial N.C. Radio News Network and on WUNC-FM. And, you may have seen us on public television in appearances on "North Carolina Now," the public affairs program that airs weekday evenings on statewide public TV.



In May, the Center kicked off its \$2 million Sustaining Fund Campaign. Former UNC President Bill Friday interviewed the state's four former governors -- Democrats Terry Sanford and Bob Scott and Republicans Jim Holshouser and Jim Martin. The governors discussed their years in office and their views on many issues affecting the future of North Carolina, including education, the environment, tax policy, health care, and economic development. Nearly 400 people attended this historic event at Raleigh's McKimmon Center, which showcased the strong bipartisan support the Center enjoys. This event also was broadcast to citizens across the state on statewide public television and on North Carolina affiliate stations of Time Warner Cable.

What a delightful program [An Evening with Four Governors and Bill Friday]. It was wonderfully satisfying to hear a civil political discussion.

-- Center member **Charlotte W. Johnston**

Because the Center's work enjoys outstanding media coverage, we can serve more citizens. In 1996, the Center's work appeared in more than 500 articles, editorials, and radio and television reports. In addition, Center staff made almost 30 speeches and public appearances as part of our public education efforts.

There is so much information out there on important issues, but very little information without a spin or slant. The Center's value to us is that its research has no spin. It's clear, complete, and factual.

-- **Mark Casey, News Director, WTVD-11 Television, Durham**

Looking Ahead to 1997

The Center is already hard at work to bring you independent research on important issues facing our state in 1997.

Early in the year, *Insight* magazine will evaluate the performance of **year-round schools** in North Carolina. Later in the year, *Insight* will present the Center's research on **state economic development policy**

issues, including trends in our economy, regional vs. statewide approaches to economic development, tax incentives to bring new business to North Carolina, the relative tax burden on business as compared to other states, job training, and the tension between urban and rural areas in economic development.

We'll also publish the 11th edition of ***Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature***. This popular guide is the most comprehensive legislative guide available and contains addresses, telephone and fax numbers, biographical data, and voting records for all 170 legislators, as well as their committee assignments, bills introduced, and other information.

We'll also continue our research on the advantages and disadvantages of the **governance structure of the 16-campus University of North Carolina system** and how it compares with governance systems in other states.

In addition, we'll continue to work to improve public policy based on our research by testifying before policymaking groups when invited and making our research available to legislators, executive branch officials, and citizens.

We invite you to suggest topics that would benefit from the Center's independent research. If you have suggestions or comments, or if you would like to order a copy of any Center publication, please write us at P. O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C., 27602, call us at (919)832-2839, or send us a fax at (919)832-2847.