



FROM THE CENTER OUT

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research...A voice for better government
August - October 1997

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Coming Soon: Economic Development Policy in N. C.

Live in the next *Insight*, economic development policy in North Carolina! This theme issue of the Center's magazine explores trends in the state's economy, the wisdom of granting incentives to expanding or relocating businesses, whether North Carolina is a high- or low-tax state, and the performance of job training programs that prepare workers for the future.

We also take a look at a few forgotten corners of the state where growth is *not* occurring and ask, "Why not?" How can places like rural Hyde County in the north-east reverse their population losses and build a stronger future for the next generation? Indeed, what tools does North Carolina need in its tool kit to build a stronger economy for the state as a whole?

Catch the next *Insight* and form your own perspective on these and many other subjects. It's a blueprint for the 21st Century, brought to you by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research and guaranteed to create a ripple effect in the state's economic development policy pond.

Year-Round Schools in North Carolina: A Recap

The Center once again ventured into public education with our recent look at year-round schools in North Carolina. Published in the May 1997 edition of *North Carolina Insight*, the Center's broad study evaluated whether the move to the year-round calendar has been a plus or a minus for classroom performance. We also provided background on how the calendar works, explored some of its pros and cons, and discussed the prevalence of the year-round schools movement in North Carolina and nationally.

North Carolina is the third leading state in the nation in the number of year-round schools, with 111 schools operating in 32 counties. Year-round students typically attend school a total of 180 days -- the same as students on a normal calendar -- but their year is divided into nine-week sessions with breaks of three-to-five weeks in between. During these breaks, remedial work can be offered to students who fall behind. Does the calendar deliver where it counts, with better results in the classroom? We examined numerous national studies and took a close look at the available numbers in North Carolina. Our conclusion? The evidence on increased student achievement is mixed. We called on the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to make data available comparing the performances of year-round and traditional-calendar schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. And, we recommended that education officials — when moving to the year-round calendar — keep it optional.

Our year-round schools report generated extensive broadcast coverage, with a half-hour television special on WTVD in Durham, a half-hour discussion on Time Warner Cable in Raleigh, and a segment on WUNC Television's *North Carolina Now*. WUNC-FM in Chapel Hill also highlighted the report with an hour-long segment on the *Linda Belans Show* and extensive news feature treatment. And, *Talk with Tom* on WPTF Radio in Raleigh devoted a large part of a two-hour show to this topic, which generated phone calls for host Tom Kearney and his guest, Center executive director Ran Coble.

The Center gratefully acknowledges grants of \$5,000 each from the Philip L Van Every Foundation in Charlotte and the Jefferson-Pilot Foundation in Greensboro to support our evaluation of year-round schools in North Carolina.

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"An Evening with Four Governors and Bill Friday" Wins Second National TV Award

The May 1996 Time Warner Cable production of the Center's "An Evening with Four Governors and Bill Friday" received an Honorable Mention in the national 1997 Videographer Awards. This award is given for special events video production. Earlier in the year, the cable production received *The Communicator* "Award of Distinction" for TV programs or videos "that exceed industry standards in quality and excellence." We send our thanks and congratulations to Center Board member Randy Fraser and to Bill Bagley, both of Time Warner Cable in the Raleigh-Durham Division for making the cable TV program possible.

Sustaining Fund Campaign Update

In 1996, the Center began a \$2 million Sustaining Fund Campaign designed to fulfill the following purposes:

- ◆ to extend the Center's independent, nonpartisan research to public libraries and teachers of government in the public schools, community colleges, and public and private colleges and universities;
- ◆ to increase use and coverage of our work by the broadcast media through new partnerships with WUNC-FM and other public radio stations in N.C.; with the commercial 90-station N.C. Radio News Network; with WVTD Television; and with public and cable television;
- ◆ to move the Center's research onto the Internet through the World Wide Web at multiple sites such as the university network called Sunsite, Charlotte's Web, Nando.net, Durham's CitySearch, and other computer networks; and
- ◆ to allow for future expansion of the Center's independent, nonpartisan efforts to foster informed debate on significant public policy issues facing North Carolina.

As of October 1997, we have raised \$1.82 million toward our \$2 million goal from foundations and corporations in North Carolina. Thank you to all the Center members who have helped us thus far. If you have not yet given, please help by:

- contributing or pledging whatever you can now;
- making a planned future gift to the Center through a bequest in your will or consulting your attorney about using other legal options; or
- becoming a Charter Donor in the Center's new circle of Individual Donors who pledge to give \$1,000 - \$5,000 a year for five years. We'd like to have 50 Center members step forward with such a pledge, and three already have done so.

We ask each Center member to consider these options seriously, and we ask every one of you to give in some way and help us ensure the Center's future service to North Carolina. Thank you!

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Center Research Affects State Policy

When the 1997 legislative session ended, the N.C. General Assembly had enacted three policy changes recommended by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. First, the 1997 budget included a provision enabling the state to buy out the private shareholders in the N.C. Railroad. The state already owned three-fourths of the stock, but private shareholders own the remaining one-fourth. The buyout will enable the state to further economic development objectives in the east and open the way for use of the railroad right-of-way for future mass transit needs between Raleigh and Charlotte. The Center first educated citizens that the public owned the railroad in a 1983 *Insight* article and then recommended the buyout in a 1995 follow-up article. Two North Carolina governors — former Governor Jim Martin and Governor Jim Hunt — the Council of State, and a study committee all have recommended that the state buy out the private shareholders. The legislature's action will start that train moving down the tracks.

Second, the 1997 legislature also acted on a recommendation made by the Center in our 1995 study of minority health issues. In that research by *Insight* editor Mike McLaughlin, the Center found that minorities in North Carolina have higher rates of disease, injury, and death from a broad range of causes than the white majority — differences that are unaccounted for even when you control for age. One of the recommendations made by the Center to deal with infant mortality and higher rates of child accidents, abuse, and neglect was to expand the Maternal Outreach Worker Program. Demonstrated as successful in other studies and in limited tryouts in North Carolina, maternal outreach workers are employed by local health departments to make home visits to mothers of children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. They also advise mothers on adequate birth spacing, a major contributor to North Carolina's high infant mortality rate. The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect and the state's Child Fatality Task Force also had endorsed the program. The final budget enacted by the legislature included \$825,000 for expansion of the Maternal Outreach Worker Program.

Third, the Center long has conducted research on campaign finance, most notably in a 1990 report comparing all 50 state campaign disclosure laws and in a 1993 report analyzing trends in the cost of legislative campaigns. Last February, Center director Ran Coble and policy analyst Mebane Rash Whitman testified before the Better Campaigns Commission chaired by North Carolina's four former governors. Among other things, they recommended that N.C. law be changed to require disclosure of the occupation and employer of campaign donors, electronic filing and posting of campaign finance reports on the Internet, and stiffer penalties for violations. All of these measures were included in the final bill passed by the legislature on the final day of the session.

Nominations to the Board of Directors Open

One of the benefits of Center membership is the opportunity to nominate yourself or others to our governing Board of Directors. Board nominees should be willing to work hard, attend quarterly Board meetings, and assist with fundraising and increasing the Center's membership. The Board sets overall policy and direction for the Center's work and suggests ideas for *Insight* topics and other research reports. Depending on their backgrounds and expertise, Board members also review drafts of articles and major reports for accuracy and clarity. The Board is balanced by race, gender, and geographic location in North Carolina, as well as by political party affiliation. To nominate yourself or someone else willing to serve a three-year (1998-2000) term, please submit the name(s) and background information (including information on race, gender, political affiliation, and location) to the Chair of the Board's Nominating Committee, John Alexander, or to Center executive director Ran Coble. You may mail nominations c/o N.C. Center, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, or fax the information to (919) 832-2847 **no later than Monday, October 20th**. You will receive a separate notice and form in the mail which you also can use to submit nominations.

Partnership with WTVD-11 Television Produces New Public Affairs Programs

The Center's new partnership with WTVD-11 Television in Durham began this year, and already the joint venture has produced two half-hour public affairs programs. Combining the Center's research talents and WTVD's broadcast talents, the first joint production in February featured the Center's research on trends in funding for the arts in North Carolina. The second production featured *Insight* editor Mike McLaughlin and his research on the performance of year-round schools in North Carolina. Hosted by WTVD news anchors Larry Stogner and Miriam Thomas, the programs are titled "Solutions" and air on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. WTVD news director Mark Casey says, "There is so much information out there on important issues, but very little information without spin or slant. The Center's value is that its research has no spin. It's clear, complete, and factual." We at the Center look forward to future collaborations with WTVD under this new partnership.



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."

1997

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N.C. Focus Anthology on State Government, State Politics, and Policy Now Available

Membership in many civic organizations—from the Boy Scouts to the PTA to the Red Cross—has declined 25 to 50 percent since the 1960s. Only 19 percent of Americans say they trust the government to do the right thing. In North Carolina, the number of registered voters who actually vote has declined from 76 percent in 1968 to 60 percent in 1996, both presidential election years, and is even lower in off-year elections.

To help citizens know more about their government and to use that knowledge, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has published an invaluable resource for North Carolina citizens called *North Carolina Focus: An Anthology on State Government, Politics, and Policy*. Authored by policy analyst Mebane Rash Whitman, *North Carolina Focus* contains 72 articles divided into three sections—one on the state's political history, another on the state's constitution and related issues, and a third on key public policy issues facing the state in the future. The opening section of *Focus* provides a unique, four-decade perspective on North Carolina's political history with articles analyzing the state's politics and demographics written in 1949, 1976, 1983, and 1993. These include V.O. Key's seminal article describing North Carolina as a "Progressive Plutocracy." The second section features clear treatment of constitutional issues with chapters on the rights of citizens; the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; and how state government is financed. Articles such as "Executive-Legislative Relations in North Carolina" and "The Role of the Judiciary in Making Public Policy" allow citizens to explore continuing constitutional values and issues, such as the separation of powers between the branches of state government. The North Carolina Constitution is reprinted in the Appendix.

The third section of *Focus* examines key public policy issues that currently dominate the political landscape and are crucial to North Carolina's future. These include chapters on economic development, education, health care, the environment, prisons, and the role of the media in covering government and politics. Tax incentives, workforce preparedness, health care cost containment, environmental issues, structured sentencing, and campaign finance reform all find a forum in *Focus*.

The articles in *Focus* are research-based, and much of the data is presented in easy-to-use tables. Examples include census and employment data, trends in the state's economy, statistics on voter turnout, per-pupil expenditures for schools by county, election results, the number of judges appointed versus the number elected, health statistics on causes of death and spending on health care, land acquisition costs for state parks, and figures on the average costs of running for elected office.

To help with this project, the Center organized and consulted an Advisory Committee of 20 North Carolinians who provided invaluable guidance and assistance. "*Focus* is a wonderful resource," says Advisory Committee member Mary Thornberry, a professor at Davidson College. "a must for those exploring politics or policy in the state." Many of the committee members are professors or public school teachers interested in using *Focus* in their classrooms. "*Focus* is a great research tool for reliable information," says Shirley Simmons, a public school teacher in Fuquay-Varina. "It's almost impossible — almost impossible — to find articles on state government in North Carolina. The pro and con articles in *Focus* are especially insightful." *Fayetteville Observer-Times* book reviewer Roy Parker, Jr. wrote that *Focus* "ought to be a resource in every school, library, and government office. And citizens ought to be required to pass a test on it."

North Carolina Focus was funded by grants from The Cannon Foundation of Concord, North Carolina, and the GE Fund of Fairfield, Connecticut. *Focus* also was made possible by the Frank U. Fletcher Memorial Gift from the A.J. Fletcher Foundation of Raleigh to support the Center's service to teachers in North Carolina.

The 817-page *Focus* is available for \$36, which includes postage, handling, and sales tax. To order, contact Laurita Ray at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research by phone (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, mail (P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602), or order on the Internet at <http://www.nando.net/insider/nccppr>.



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