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New Generation of Lobbyists Emerges in the Legislature, Public Policy Center Says

The times they are a-changing. The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research today unveiled its latest biennial list of the 50 most influential lobbyists in the N.C. General Assembly, and all indications are that a new generation of lobbyists has entered the ranks of the most influential. Nine of the top 50 are entirely new, six have been ranked only once before, and a record number of women appear.

A New Generation of Lobbyists

Every two years, the Center surveys all legislators, registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and the capital news media asking them to name the most influential lobbyists. This year, nine of 50 most influential lobbyists are newcomers. Andrew Romanet (28th), lobbyist for the N.C. League of Municipalities, is the highest-ranked newcomer. Other newcomers to the rankings include Craig Souza (34th), with the N.C. Health Care Facilities Association; Ann Duncan (36th), former legislator and contract lobbyist with the law firm of Womble Carlyle Sandridge and Rice; Deborah Ross (37th), representing the American Civil Liberties Union of N.C.; Lynn Holmes (39th), lobbying on behalf of BellSouth; Tommy Harrelson (44th), former legislator and former Secretary of Transportation representing multiple clients; Lou Wilson (47th), representing the N.C. Association of Long-Term Care Facilities; Keith Hundley (48th), representing Weyerhaeuser Company; and Bill Brooks (50th), lobbying on behalf of the N.C. Family Policy Council.

Three of these newcomers represent associations, two are contract lobbyists, two represent single companies, and two are public interest lobbyists. In addition to these nine, six more lobbyists appear in the rankings for only the second time.

"There are new hired guns in town, and they are firing their information at the legislature with increasing influence," says Ran Coble, executive director of the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. The Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization which analyzes trends in state politics and policy and evaluates state government programs. "If you compare names in the rankings of the most influential lobbyists 10 years ago with those released today, you'll find only 12 names on both lists."

Key trends in the rankings of the most influential lobbyists:

- *Nine of the top 50 are new to the rankings, and six have been ranked only once before.
- *A record number of women (12) are ranked among the most influential.
- *This marks the first time an African-American (Lynn Holmes of BellSouth) has been ranked among the most influential.
- *Changes in North Carolina's economy are showing up in the rankings, as few lobbyists representing tobacco, textiles, and furniture are ranked, but more lobbyists for health care, hogs, and homebuilders appear in the rankings.
- *Former legislators who are lawyers still dominate the top spots in the rankings.

Record Number of Women Among New Generation of Influential Lobbyists

Part of this new generation of lobbyists is a record number of women ranked among the most influential this year. Twelve women have made the rankings, or roughly 25 percent. This parallels the ratio of female to male lobbyists registered with the Secretary of State's office, when at the close of the 1997 long session, 147 of the 551 lobbyists, or 27 percent, were women.

Leslie Bevacqua, representing N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry, a statewide chamber of commerce, is the highest ranked woman this year at 12th. This is the highest ranking held by a woman since Alice Garland, formerly with the State Employees Association and now with ElectriCities of N.C., was ranked 6th in 1989. "Many women lobbyists now are representing the 'pure business sector'," says Bevacqua. "Women used to represent the more traditional women's issues, or social issues. That is not the case any longer. . . . It's all about who you represent and the issues you represent. The men at the top are there because they have multiple clients, with a broad spectrum of issues. As women diversify, they will enjoy more success as well."

Hot Issues Make Hot Lobbyists

A lobbyist may find himself or herself among the most influential in one session and not ranked in another as the issue on which they lobby gains or loses importance in the legislature. For example, lobbyists on health care issues and electric industry deregulation rose this session, while lobbyists for gun issues and the Department of Transportation fell or dropped out of the rankings.

In health care, three lobbyists for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina appear in the rankings -- Brad Adcock at 11th, Ken Eudy at 19th, and Brad Wilson at 30th, with contract lobbyist Roger Bone (3rd) also helping out. Other health care lobbyists among the most influential are William Pully of the N.C. Hospital Association at 20th, Harry Kaplan for Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Maxicare at 31st, Craig Souza of the N.C. Health Care Facilities Association at 34th, and Lou Wilson of the N.C. Association of Long-Term Care Facilities at 47th.

A legislative study commission will examine the issue of electric deregulation prior to the 1999 legislature session, and the latest lobbyist rankings also show that utility industry lobbyists already are building relationships and clout in advance of that battle. Carolina Power and Light Company has six lobbyists, (mostly contract lobbyists) in the top 50, ElectriCities has three, and Duke Energy Corporation one, but that one is top-ranked Zeb Alley.

With gun control and gun carrying laws almost disappearing from the legislative agenda this session, gun lobbyists dropped out or fell from the rankings. Jeff Freeman of the National Rifle Association fell out of the rankings after being 19th in 1996. And, Joseph McClees, a contract lobbyist from New Bern who represents the N.C. Firearms Dealers Group, dropped from 16th to 25th.

Historically, the only state agency other than the Office of the Governor and the University of North Carolina with a lobbyist ranked among the most influential was the N.C. Department of Transportation. For example, department lobbyist Wesley Webster ranked 35th in 1990, and Dan DeVane ranked 20th in 1996. Both were former legislators. This session, with controversy over a \$100,000 settlement payment to former Division of Motor Vehicles employee Algie Toomer and with three members of the Board of Transportation resigning after questions over conflicts of interest, no DOT lobbyist appeared in the rankings.

In commenting on the rise and fall of certain issues and how that affects lobbyists' clout, former legislator and contract lobbyist Alexander "Sandy" Sands (ranked 16th) says, "Everything is on a pendulum. In the past, the environmental community didn't have much of an opportunity to be heard. Now, the pendulum has swung in their favor. And, it is the same in other industries as well."

Contract lobbyist Don Beason (ranked 2nd) believes that health care is of significant concern to legislators today. He echoes Sands belief that all issues come and go when he says, "The economy of this state is evolving. We didn't always have a hog industry or a technology industry. The HMO issue is big now, but it will be settled in the next five to seven years, in my opinion. And then it will be something else."

What Didn't Change: Former Legislators and Lawyers Dominate The Top Spots

Even with a new generation of lobbyists becoming influential and new issues coming to the fore, the top spots in the rankings are still dominated by former legislators and lawyers. Former legislator and lawyer Zeb Alley, a contract lobbyist for clients in business and industry, continues his reign as the most influential lobbyist for the sixth session in a row. Don Beason has changed places with former legislator Roger Bone at #2 and #3, respectively. Both Beason and Bone are contract lobbyists for multiple clients. Former Sierra Club and environmental lobbyist Bill Holman finished at 4th, the highest ranking ever earned by an environmental or public interest lobbyist. Holman has since moved into the executive branch as Assistant Secretary for Environmental Protection. Phil Kirk rounds out the top 5, representing N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry, the state chamber of commerce. Attorney and contract lobbyist John Bode ranked 6th, and former legislator Al Adams ranked 8th.

The Success Stories: Team Lobbying, Former Legislators and Lawyers, and Contract Lobbyists

When the N.C. Center first began releasing its rankings in 1981, team lobbying was unheard of. Today, that has changed. Of the 551 corporations, associations, and organizations registered with the Secretary of State at the close of the 1997 long session, 284 had two or more individuals lobbying on their behalf. Of those teams, 123 have at least one team member ranked among the 50 most influential, and 42 have at least two members ranked.

"It used to be that everybody worked alone. Now, I'll often team up with someone else, or hire someone else to lobby with me," says Zeb Alley. "The climate has changed. People [in the General Assembly] have a difficult time arriving at a consensus, particularly in the House." As a result, lobbying does not begin and end with those Senators and Representatives in the most powerful positions.

One successful team approach has been developed by the law firm of Womble, Carlyle, Sandridge and Rice. Two members of their team, former legislators Sandy Sands and Ann Duncan, are ranked 16th and 36th, respectively. Sands attributes much of their success to the strong support they receive from others in the firm. "Sam Taylor, an attorney here at Womble, gives us advice from the legal standpoint. And Andy [Sands, his son] is extremely helpful as a young hustler, monitoring activity and covering committee meetings that Ann and I just can't cover." Sands also states that other attorneys get involved in specific issues as the need arises. He says, "[The General Assembly] wants information, and we're able to provide it for them. The support system we have at Womble Carlyle allows us to do that for them."

Sands and Duncan are not the only former legislators to find success as lobbyists. In this year's rankings, a total of nine former legislators are ranked, with seven of those nine ranked in the top 25. These include Alley at #1, Bone at 3rd, Kirk at 5th and Adams at 8th. Marvin Musselwhite and Sam Johnson, both contract lobbyists, also rank 10th and 13th, respectively. Rounding out the list of nine former legislators is Tommy Harrelson at 44th.

In addition to former legislators, attorneys also wield particular influence as lobbyists. Of the top 50 lobbyists this year, 22, or 44 percent, are attorneys, with 13 of those 22 earning positions in the top 25 (52%).

Contract lobbyists also continue to dominate the rankings, taking seven of the top 10 positions, and 9 of the top 16. In contrast, lobbyists with a single client dominate the bottom half of the rankings, with 14 of the bottom 18 slots being held by lobbyists representing only one client.

How The Rankings Are Done and About the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research

This is the ninth time the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has released its lobbyist rankings. "The rankings of the most influential lobbyists are useful because voters need to know what key interests have clout with legislators in North Carolina, as well as who is *not* represented in the legislature," says the Center's Coble.

The rankings are based on results from a survey conducted during the fall of 1997 after adjournment of the regular session of the N.C. General Assembly. All 170 state legislators, as well as 308 legislative liaisons and registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and 28 capital news correspondents were asked to list the 10 most influential lobbyists or legislative liaisons of the 1997 General Assembly session. Survey respondents received a list of the lobbyists and legislative liaisons registered with the Secretary of State.

Ninety-one of the 120 House members (76 percent) responded to the Center's survey, as did 39 of the 50 Senators (78 percent), 147 of the 308 legislative liaisons and registered lobbyists based in North Carolina (48 percent), and eight of the 28 capital news correspondents (28 percent). The overall response rate was 56 percent.

During the 1997 session, 551 lobbyists were registered with the Secretary of State, representing 609 different companies or organizations. The Center's calculations of the number of lobbyists avoids double-counting by counting each lobbyist only once, even if they represent more than one client. There were also 293 legislative liaisons representing 28 different state government agencies and licensing boards.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit corporation created to study public policy issues facing North Carolina and to evaluate state government's performance. The Center is supported in part by a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem. Additional funding comes from 13 private foundations, 190 corporate contributors, and more than 900 individual and organizational members. The Center publishes *North Carolina Insight* magazine and book-length research reports. Recent studies by the Center have examined year-round schools, state job training programs, and rural economic development. The Center also publishes a citizens' guide to the legislature and a textbook for teachers of state government.

The lobbyist rankings are available for \$5.00 from the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602. This publication is a companion piece to *Article II: A Guide to the 1997-98 N.C. Legislature*, which, with the legislative rankings, is available for \$30.50. Both prices include postage and handling. *Article II* is a directory of legislators serving in the 1997-1998 session. It includes each legislator's educational background, occupation, list of bills introduced, committee assignments, the bills they sponsored, voting records on 15 important bills, and rankings of their effectiveness. To order, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order through the Center's Website at <http://www.nando.net/insider/nccppr>.

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