

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

a voice for better government

1998 Accomplishments

Educating the Public



20th Anniversary Celebration — On March 11, about 300 Center members and friends gathered in Durham to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research and enjoy “An Evening With Four Educators.” The late John Holliman, CNN’s national assignment reporter, moderated a discussion among UNC President Molly Corbett Broad, N.C. Central Chancellor Julius Chambers, N.C. Community College System President Martin Lancaster, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Ward. These education leaders discussed the key accomplishments and challenges for the state’s universities, community colleges, and public schools, how to increase access to higher education, and whether a state lottery would provide a good source of funds for education. This event combined the Center’s traditional values of utilizing the richness of the state’s diverse population and of educating the public on important

issues such as education. The event also celebrated past Center accomplishments and demonstrated our desire to reach more citizens with our research through broadcast outlets such as cable television. The N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association sponsored the event and later aired the videotape statewide on cable television.

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research has been a state treasure for two decades, a rare blend of substance and objectivity. It has made measurable improvements in the quality of government North Carolinians enjoy. The Center’s 20th anniversary is an event eminently worth celebrating.

– David DuBuisson, Associate Editor, *New & Record*, Greensboro

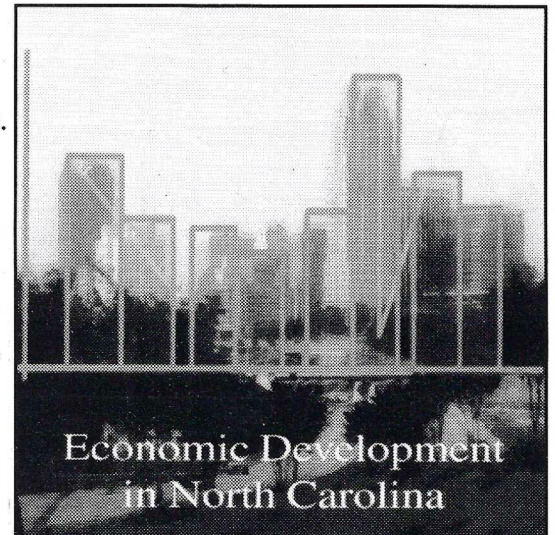
Educating Children with Special Needs — The Center capped 1998 by releasing a theme issue of *North Carolina Insight* magazine on children with special needs. This in-depth examination of issues in special education includes Center recommendations on (1) how the state could address the fact that state funds are heavily weighted toward state institutions that serve fewer children with special needs than are served in community-based programs; and (2) how the state could speed up the process for resolving disputes when parents and educators disagree over how a child with special needs should be taught. Also included is an overview of issues in special education — such as how federal or state policies may conflict in testing and disciplining children with special needs. The issue closes with a look at success stories in educating children with disabilities.



New Research Evaluating Government Performance

issue on economic development was hitting Center members' mailboxes. Our in-depth treatment of this topic raised the level of public debate on granting incentives to new and expanding industry, led to legislative testimony by Center staff on job training programs in North Carolina, and contributed to the discussion about water, sewer, and natural gas needs in rural North Carolina. The legislature passed new legislation governing tax incentives to new and expanding industry, and in November, voters approved a \$1 billion statewide bond issue to address the water, sewer, and natural gas needs.

Economic Development – As we began 1998, the *Insight* theme



When thinking North Carolinians want unbiased objective information, they turn to the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. Since its founding, the Center's staff and Board have earned the confidence of thousands of our citizens, including the news media and our elected and appointed officials.

— Phil Kirk, President, N.C. Citizens for Business & Industry

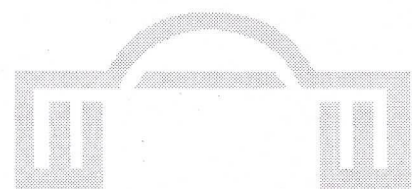
Higher Education in North Carolina – The Center is in the midst of an extensive project focusing on higher education governance in North Carolina. In 1971, the N.C. General Assembly restructured the governance of higher education by creating a consolidated governing board, the UNC Board of Governors, and enlarging the size of the University of North Carolina to 16 constituent campuses. Now, the Center has begun a four-part study of key issues in the governance of higher education. In January, we will release *Reorganizing Higher Education in North Carolina: What History Tells Us About Our Future*. This first report shows that many of the policy issues of concern to legislators in 1971 continue to resonate today: how to distribute state resources fairly among a large, diverse group of institutions; how best to protect the university system from potentially harmful political interference; what role the state's five historically black universities should play in the system; how to maintain academic excellence; and how to balance power and flexibility between the central Board of Governors and the 16 individual campus boards of trustees.

Enhancing Government Accountability

emphasis on enhancing government accountability and educating voters by publishing the 11th edition of *Effectiveness Rankings for Members of the North Carolina General Assembly* and the ninth edition of *The 50 Most Influential Lobbyists in the North Carolina General Assembly*.

Rankings of Legislators' Effectiveness and Lobbyists' Influence – The Center continued its

1997 *Effectiveness Rankings for Members of the North Carolina General Assembly*



a report by

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

It's something of a rarity in the think-tank business. It has a non-ideological outlook that requires its board of directors to reflect the political, demographic and geographic diversity of the state. It has a tradition of accommodating opposing points of view in its sometimes heavy-duty research projects

and book-length reports. Its board chairs have included conservatives and liberals, who have insisted on the institution's intellectual independence.

— Jack Betts, Associate Editor, *The Charlotte Observer*

Media Coverage – Citizens across North Carolina continued to benefit from independent, nonpartisan research and analysis of state policy and politics because of the extensive news coverage the Center's work receives. In 1998, the Center was the subject of more than 300 news articles and 700 radio and television reports. We also continued our partnership with WTVD in an effort to bring our research to citizens across the Triangle and eastern North Carolina. In January, WTVD aired a half-hour special on the Center's research on rural economic development issues. In late 1998, WTVD will present a special program based on our research on children with special needs. We also continued to build on our partnership with WUNC-FM and public radio stations across the state. Special radio reports based on the Center's research are inserted into NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered." Finally, Center staff provided election analysis on the 90-station N.C. Radio News Network.

Affecting Policy

Job Training Programs – Earlier this year, the Center released a theme issue of *Insight* magazine on key issues in state economic development policy, including an evaluation of the state's performance in job training programs. On January 28, 1998, we presented our findings and recommendations to the Joint Legislative Study Commission on Job Training Programs. The Center recommended that the state adopt a goal that job training programs place a majority of their participants in jobs that pay above the poverty level and that these workers be able to keep their jobs for at least one year. The Center also recommended a gubernatorial task force to consider consolidating the 49 job training programs identified by the Center. The legislative study commission will consider the Center's recommendations and those of other groups and report to the 1999 General Assembly.

We appreciated both your willingness to appear before the commission and the expertise which you displayed in answering various questions from the commission members. Your explanation certainly aided us in understanding the vast amount of work that you have done, as well as what needs to be done by this commission. — Senator Walter Dalton, (D- Rutherford) and Representative Edgar Starnes, (R-Caldwell),
Co-Chairs, Joint Legislative Study Commission on Job Training Programs

N.C. Railroad – In March 1998, the state finally bought out the private shareholders in the N.C. Railroad, as recommended by the Center over the years. The 1997 General Assembly passed legislation authorizing the buyout, an action that anticipates state transportation needs as much as 10 years down the road. In 1983 and 1995, we published research that informed citizens that they owned three-fourths of the N.C. Railroad, which runs 317 miles from Morehead City to Charlotte. After documenting the history of conflicts between the railroad's public and private shareholders, the Center recommended in *Insight* magazine that the state buy out the private shareholders to foster economic development in the eastern part of the state and open the way for using the railroad right of way for future mass transit between Charlotte and Raleigh

Year-Round Schools – In its 1997 study of year-round schools in North Carolina, the Center recommended that local school districts keep year-round schools optional. We also recommended that the state Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education require the Department of Public Instruction to publish comparative data on how students on the year-round calendar perform academically compared to students in similar traditional-calendar schools. The legislature responded in the 1998 session with an effort to broaden the option by encouraging local school systems to offer year-round schools at each grade span, such as elementary, middle, and high school. The primary sponsor of the bill says he was informed by the Center's study and wanted more parents to have the option of attending year-round schools.

Looking Ahead

Sustaining the Center's Future – In 1996, the Center began a \$2 million Sustaining Fund Campaign to help ensure our independence and enable us to continue bringing you meaningful research on the issues that affect your daily lives. With more than \$1.87 million raised, we've attained 93 percent of our goal. We need your help to complete the Campaign. If you have not made a gift, please use the enclosed reply card to do so today. The Center staff will be happy to answer any questions you have about the campaign. Please call us at (919) 832-2839.

Higher Education – In 1999, we will continue our focus on education by publishing the second part of our series of reports on higher education, *Higher Education Governance in the 50 States*. The third installment will compare the powers of the UNC Board of Governors with those of their counterparts in other states and with the powers of campus boards of trustees. The fourth report will examine the performance of the Board of Governors since its creation in 1971.

Hispanic/Latino Health – Work also is under way on the Center's evaluation of health issues facing Latino citizens, which will be published in *Insight* magazine in 1999. In 1993, the Center highlighted the growth in North Carolina's Hispanic population as one of the key demographic trends in the state. Nationally, 29 percent of Hispanics live below the poverty line, and national studies have shown Hispanics to be the racial or ethnic group least likely to have health insurance.

Government Accountability – In the spring of 1999, we will publish the 11th edition of *Article II: A Guide to the 1999-2000 N.C. Legislature*. *Article II* is the most comprehensive legislative guide available and contains biographical and voting information for each of the 170 legislators, as well as their committee assignments, bills introduced, effectiveness rankings, and other pertinent information.

Wood Chip Mills – Next year, we'll begin work on an evaluation of wood chip mills and their effects on the state's environment and economy. We'll look at who benefits from the harvesting of wood chips, who gets hurt, and whether the gain outweighs the pain for future generations. Our research will be published in *Insight*.

Public Education Reforms – We're also planning an analysis of North Carolina's record in sustaining its efforts in various public school reforms. This study will examine experiments in lengthening the school year in 1983, the Basic Education Plan in 1985, the School Improvement and Accountability Act in 1989, the Outcome-Based Education Program in 1991, charter schools legislation in 1996, and the new ABC accountability program in 1996.

We welcome your suggestions for topics that would benefit from the Center's independent, nonpartisan research. To make a suggestion, comment, or order any Center publication, please call us at (919) 832-2839, send us a fax at (919) 832-2847, or visit our web site at www.nando.net/insider/nccppr.



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."

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