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**NC HAS 2nd MOST LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES
AND MOST CHAIRS IN U.S., SAYS POLICY CENTER**

The North Carolina legislature now has the second largest number of committees and the most committee chairs of any legislature in the country, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research in a new report released today. The Center says North Carolina is more a two-political party state now, and this has led legislative leaders to share power by creating more chairmanships. However, the Center's new guide to the legislature also shows that the same committees -- Appropriations and Finance -- remain the most powerful session after session.

"The large number of committees and chairs has advantages and disadvantages," says Center director Ran Coble. "On the up side, when you increase the number of committees and chairmanships, you increase the opportunities for more legislators to play an important role. But on the down side, having multiple chairs leads to 'chair-shopping' as legislators and lobbyists wait until their favorite chair is presiding to bring up their bills."

The Center says the current system also confuses accountability since some Senate committees have both Senior Chairs and additional Co-Chairs, and some House committees have as many as four Co-Chairs. For example, the Senate Redistricting Committee has Senator Brad Miller (D-Wake) as Senior Chair and two additional Co-Chairs, while the House Appropriations Committee and House Finance Committee each have four Co-Chairs.

The Center says the fight for Speaker of the House last January also fueled an increase in the number of committee chairs. In exchange for Republican Party support, Democratic Speaker Jim Black (D-Mecklenburg) agreed to appoint Republicans as Co-Chairs of 14 House Committees and to have party representation on committees generally reflect the make-up of the House, which has 62 Democrats and 58 Republicans. Black also agreed to appoint an equal number of Republicans and Democrats to the two House redistricting committees. Some African-American Democrats who offered to ally with Republicans and unseat Black lost their chance to become committee chairs. As a result, 10 of the 18 black Democrats found themselves without a chair when the music stopped.

"North Carolina now has 78 committee chairs in a 120-member House and 35 committee chairs in a 50-member Senate," says Coble. "The companies that manufacture walnut gavels are probably hoping for a 50-50 split between Democrats and Republicans in the next election so they can sell even more gavels."

Though the committee structure in the legislature is changing, one thing remains the same. The Center's survey of legislators, lobbyists, and capital news media showed that the most powerful committees are still the money committees -- Appropriations, which handles the state budget, and Finance, which handles all tax legislation. Survey respondents ranked the Appropriations and Finance committees in both houses as the most powerful committees for all but one of the last 12 sessions. Other committees ranked among the most powerful are the Rules, Judiciary, and Education committees.

The Center's research shows that the North Carolina legislature has a total of 73 committees on which its 170 legislators serve -- 25 committees in the Senate and 48 in the House. According to the Center's research and that of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Denver, Colorado, the New York legislature is first with 78 committees, North Carolina is second with 73, and Florida is third with 66. New York has a total of 211 legislators, and Florida has 160.

Even though 14 other states have more legislators, the North Carolina legislature has the second largest number of committees. North Carolina was first in the number of committees in 1987, according to Center research.

The sheer number of committees requires legislators to keep abreast of greater numbers of issues and places greater demands on their time. In some cases, they must literally be two or three places at once. In the House, where members serve on an average of seven committees, the Center found 50 instances in which members serve on two standing committees that are scheduled to meet at the same time. In one case, a House member serves on three standing committees scheduled to meet at the same time. Rep. Nelson Cole (D-Rockingham) is Co-Chair of the Economic Growth and Community Development Committee and also a member of the Financial Institutions Committee and the Highway Safety and Law Enforcement Committee -- all three of which are scheduled to meet on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.

The North Carolina legislature also leads the nation in the number of committee chairmanships with 113 Chairs and Co-Chairs -- 35 in the Senate and 78 in the House. The state's nearest rivals in handing out gavels are New York, a distant second with 78 chairs, and Florida, with 68 chairs. In most legislatures, there is one chair for each committee.

In the N.C. House, 46 of the 62 Democrats hold a gavel as a committee Chair or Co-Chair. Republicans chair or co-chair 14 committees, probably a record in North Carolina for a minority party. In the Senate, 31 of the 35 Democrats chair or co-chair a committee. The only Senate Democrats without gavels are President Pro-Tempore Marc Basnight (D-Dare), who appoints all Senate committees, and three freshman Democratic Senators -- Cal Cunningham (D-Davidson), A.B. Swindell IV (D-Nash), and Scott Thomas (D-Craven).

Commenting on the Senate committee structure, Sen. Austin Allan (R-Catawba) says, "On the positive side, the number of committees allows the entire membership to take part in the process. For example, even if you are in the distinct minority in party affiliation, you are still allowed to serve on a lot of committees, so that you have the ability to express your point of view and have some influence in the legislative process. On the down side, all Senators tend to be on so many committees that ... it's difficult just to stay on top of other demands you have in a day, like trying to attend to letters, phone calls, e-mails, and visitors."

On the House side, Rep. Wayne Goodwin (D-Richmond) says, "In my opinion, the plethora of committees does more good than harm in the legislative process. Though the increased number of committees lends itself to a more burdensome structure and more chairpersons wielding authority, it does allow for more specialized attention by lawmakers to legislation and greater overall efficiency both in hearing bills and in

voting upon them in a timely fashion. Furthermore, it reflects North Carolina's history of decentralized power among its state officials."

The House committee structure in particular has some strange twists and turns. There are committees on Health and on Public Health, three Judiciary committees, two redistricting committees, two Local Government committees but only one State Government committee, both a State Personnel Committee and a Pensions and Retirement Committee, and both substantive and money committees covering the same four areas – education, environment, health, and transportation.

The appointments to House committee chairmanships also brought results that are explainable only by who supported the winning candidate for Speaker of the House. Former House Speakers Dan Blue, a Democrat, and Harold Brubaker, a Republican, did not receive a committee chairmanship. Neither did former Democratic Majority Leader Toby Fitch or former Republican gubernatorial candidate and current Minority Leader Leo Daughtry. Democrat Martin Nesbitt and Republican George Holmes, both former Appropriations Committee Chairs, did not receive a gavel this session. Yet second-termers Daniel Barefoot, Leslie Cox, Phil Haire, Marian McLawhorn, Junior Teague, Russell Tucker, and Edith Warren did.

Other legislative trends highlighted by the Center this year include:

- The number of retirees in the General Assembly this year (46 of 170 legislators) is at an all-time high.
- Twenty-four lawmakers first got to the legislature by appointment to a vacant seat, not by election.
- Even though North Carolina does not have term limits, turnover is still high. Over the last 20 years, turnover in the House has averaged almost 25% each session, and almost 19% in the Senate. This year, there are 24 legislators who were not there at the start of the 1999-2000 session.
- Each Senator serves on an average of eight committees, and each House member serves on an average of seven committees.
- Of the top 15 leadership posts in the Senate, six are held by legislators from rural areas, while 14 of the top 23 leaders in the House are from rural counties. This may change after this year's redistricting as urban areas -- especially in the Research Triangle and Charlotte -- will gain seats, while rural areas in the northeast and southeast areas of the state will lose seats.

These and other legislative trends can be found in *Article II: A Guide to the 2001-2002 North Carolina Legislature*. Authored by Center policy analyst Ann Hale, this citizens' guide contains profiles on each of the 170 members of the General Assembly, including photos; business, home, and e-mail addresses; telephone and fax numbers; counties in the districts they serve; number of terms served in the legislature; and each legislator's educational and occupational background. For members who served in the previous session, the guide lists five bills they introduced in 1999-2000, their votes on 15 bills of statewide interest during the 1999-2000 session, and a history of rankings of each legislator's effectiveness since 1981. These rankings are based on surveys of all legislators, registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and the capital news media. The latest set of legislative effectiveness rankings was released in April 2000. Also included are demographic and occupational trends for the General Assembly since 1981 and a list of the 50 most influential lobbyists.

A pocket-sized *Supplement to Article II* contains information that citizens, lobbyists, or reporters need, including all committee assignments and each legislator's political party affiliation, home county, legislative office address and telephone number, e-mail address at the General Assembly, and legislative seat number. The supplement also contains seating charts, committee meeting schedules, and deadlines for introducing various kinds of bills and resolutions.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization created to study public issues facing North Carolina and to evaluate state government programs. The Center receives general operating support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, with additional funding from 13 other foundations, 190 corporate contributors, and almost 1,000 individual and organizational members across the state. In addition to publishing *Article II: A Guide to the 2001-2002 N.C. Legislature*, the Center also publishes *North Carolina Insight* magazine, book-length research reports, and a textbook for teachers of state and local government. The Center recently published a report on how public universities are governed in all 50 states, an evaluation of other states' experiences with 38 state lotteries, and an analysis of North Carolina's record in sustaining public school reforms. It currently is conducting research on opportunities and challenges facing Eastern North Carolina.

Copies of *Article II: A Guide to the 2001-2002 North Carolina Legislature* and the *Supplement* with committee assignments are available from the Center for \$25 a set, which includes tax, postage, and handling. To order, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh N.C. 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order through the Center's Web site at www.ncinsider.com/nccppr.

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