



# The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

*A voice for good government*

## Accomplishments in 2001

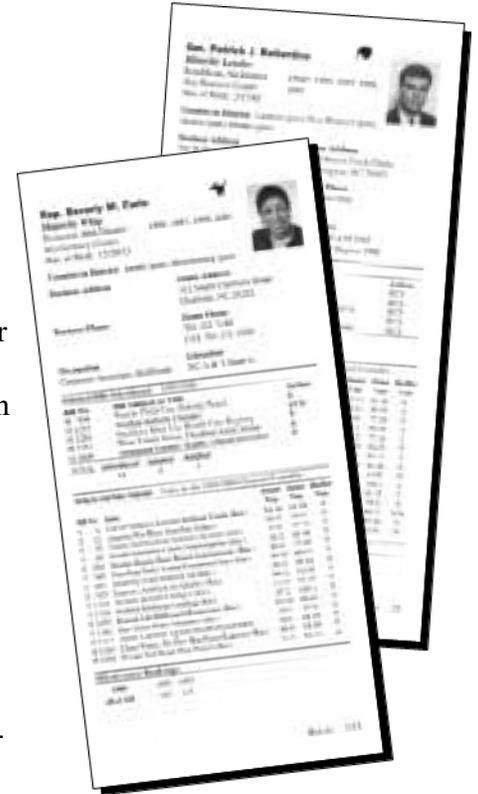
### Educating the Public and Involving Citizens in Public Policy

#### A Citizen's Guide to the Legislature –

In 2001, the Center published the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of *Article II: A Guide to the 2001-2002 N.C. Legislature*. It is a resource for citizens to use in contacting

their legislators and getting involved in public policy issues in North Carolina. The guide contains profiles on each of the 170 members of the General Assembly, including photos; legislative, business, home and e-mail addresses; phone and fax numbers; committee assignments and meeting schedules; number of terms served; and educational and occupational backgrounds. For members who served in the previous session, the guide also lists five bills they introduced in 1999-2000, their votes on 15 of the most important bills in the 1999-2000 session, and a history of rankings of each legislator's effectiveness since 1981.

This guide also is a resource to the news media in profiling legislators and analyzing trends in the legislature. This year, the Center's research shows that the North Carolina legislature now has the second largest number of committees and the most committee chairs of any legislature in the nation. And, the guide shows that 46 of 170 legislators are retirees, an all-time high. Twenty-two newspapers published 26 articles on trends identified in our legislative guide, which also received news coverage on the 90 radio stations in the N.C. News Network.



*"The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research has been a valuable source of information for me. I can think of no other organization that has been more valuable to me as a legislator in my efforts to formulate legislation and develop state policy."*

**Senator Howard Lee (D-Orange)**

*"I really do place a high value on the research you all do. I keep every copy because it's really good information, and I use it as a reference tool when doing programs for various groups. I think it's particularly good for legislators. You really provide insight into issues we need to know about. I think [the Center] does a really good job. You try to bring balance to the issues and be neutral and present all sides. That's why you have so much credibility."*

**Representative Jean Preston (R-Carteret)**

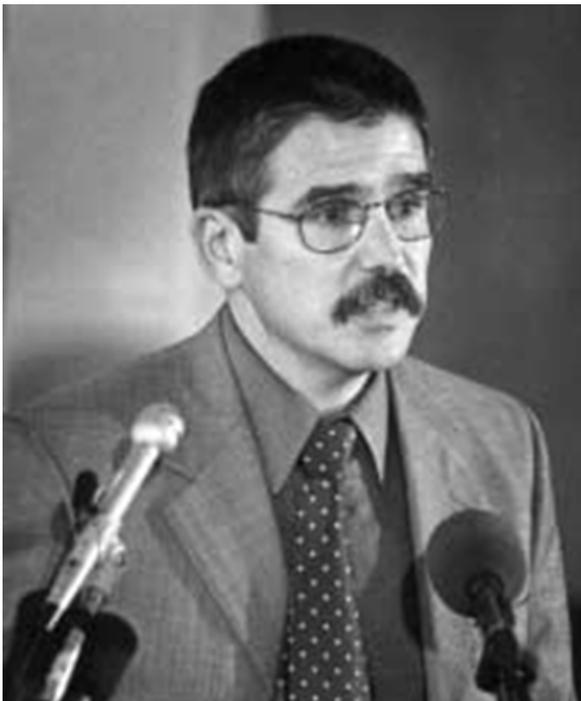
*The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to the goals of a better-informed public and more effective, accountable, and responsive government. The Center identifies public policy issues facing North Carolina and enriches the dialogue among citizens, the media, and policymakers. Based on its research, the Center makes recommendations for improving the way government serves the people of this state. In all its efforts, the Center values reliable and objective research as a basis for analyzing public policy, independence from partisan bias and political ideology, the richness of the state's diverse population, and a belief in the importance of citizen involvement in public life.*

## Research Affecting Policy

### Testimony Before Legislative Committees

#### State Lotteries – In

October, *North Carolina Insight* magazine editor Mike McLaughlin testified at a public hearing held by the N.C. House of Representatives Rules Committee on state lotteries. He reviewed the Center's research on 13 key questions about the experiences of the 38 state lotteries already operating in the United States. The Center's study contains research findings on such questions as: Are lotteries large and reliable sources of revenue? Do lotteries prey on the poor? Do lotteries provide new revenue for education or merely supplant existing revenues? The Center's study shows four pluses for lotteries, five minuses, and four areas where the research findings are inconclusive.



**Children with Special Needs** – In January, *Insight* editor Mike McLaughlin testified before both the legislature's Education Oversight Committee and the Legislative Study Commission on Children with Special Needs. He highlighted the Center's findings on the large amount of money spent and low number of children served in state institutions for the blind, deaf, developmentally disabled, and mentally ill, compared to the lower costs and higher number served in community-based programs. After the Center's testimony, the Legislative Study Commission on Children with Special Needs included all of our recommendations in its own recommendations to the General Assembly, including reauthorizing the commission to study eight issues raised by the Center.

### Center Research Leads to Legislation

**Reducing Racial Disparities in Health Care** – In a 1995 study, the Center recommended several measures to reduce racial disparities in health care, based on our study of health issues affecting minorities in North Carolina. That study found major gaps in health outcomes, death rates, and disease rates when the health status of minorities was compared to that of the white majority. Former Gov. Jim Hunt implemented several of the Center's recommendations to address this issue, and Senator James Forrester (R-Guilford) introduced legislation in 2001 to study this issue further. The bill passed the Senate and is pending action in the House.

**Interpreters in Local Health Departments** – In a 1999 study of health issues affecting Hispanics, the Center found that only 68 percent of Hispanic women receive prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy, compared to 88 percent of whites and 73 percent of African Americans. In addition, Hispanic children are less likely to receive on-time immunizations than other racial or ethnic groups, exposing themselves and the wider population to potentially deadly childhood diseases, such as rubella. Finally, Hispanic males are disproportionately more likely to be injured or killed on the job. Our survey of all 87 local health departments and 131 other health care providers found that language problems are the biggest barrier to providing adequate health care to Hispanics in North Carolina. Hispanics constitute from 20 to 40 percent of health department caseloads in many counties. The Center recommended that the state appropriate funds for interpreters in local health departments, and legislation was introduced in 2001 in both the House and Senate to provide funds for interpreters.

**Wood Chip Mills and State Forestry Policy** – In 1999, the Center completed a study of state forestry policy and made recommendations toward a sustainable forest policy in North Carolina. One recommendation was to allow a tax credit for exports of wood chips through state ports to expire (upon its sunset date of February 28, 2001) because the credit could encourage faster depletion of forest resources and distort market pricing. The Center found that the number of wood chip mills increased from two to 18 since 1980 and that the hardwood-pulpwood harvest increased 170 percent since 1989. The tax credit did expire in February, but state Senators

introduced legislation in September to reinstate the tax credit. The Center persisted in our efforts to have exports of wood chips excluded from the tax credit.

### Center Serves As Resource to Legislators and Media

Sometimes, the Center's research does not disclose a clear finding on a public policy problem or point to specific solutions. Still, our research can identify policy options, list the pros and cons, raise the level of debate, and serve as an important resource to legislators, the media, and the public. During the 2001 legislative session, Center studies on state lotteries, citizen legislatures and limits on session length, four-year terms for legislators, merit selection of judges, team election of the governor and lieutenant governor, appointment (instead of election) of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and higher education governance all have been used in legislative debates, as committee handouts, or in news coverage of these issues.

**Media Coverage** – More citizens are able to benefit from our research because the Center's work enjoys outstanding media coverage. In 2001, the Center's work appeared in more than 330 newspaper articles, editorials, and radio and television news reports. Over the last two years, we have increased our presence in the broadcast media with a monthly radio show on WPTF-AM, cable TV broadcasts on public policy issues in collaboration with Time Warner Cable and the N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association, and informal partnerships with the 90-station N.C. Radio News Network, statewide public television, and public radio.

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*"The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is a good resource for the media. For North Carolina Now, we often use the Center for information and independent analysis of public affairs issues facing all North Carolinians. The Center provides information that is fair, thorough, and balanced."*

**Shannon Vickery, Senior Correspondent and Managing Editor, North Carolina Now, WUNC-TV**

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### New Research on Public Policy Issues Facing North Carolina

**Eastern North Carolina** – The December issue of *North Carolina Insight* focuses on Eastern North Carolina. The East trails the rest of the state on a broad range of indicators – per capita income, poverty, and percentage of residents who are college graduates. Falling commodity prices have battered the farm sector, the region's manufacturing base continues to erode, and the East is still recovering from Hurricane Floyd. Given all these challenges, the Center thought the time was right for an in-depth look at issues facing Eastern North Carolina. What are its infrastructure needs? How does it stack up in terms of human resources? What is the future of agriculture? What are the benefits and liabilities of the region's huge military presence? How has Hurricane Floyd improved disaster preparation? And finally, does the East need a broad regional approach, a sort of Marshall Plan, to help it close the gap with the rest of the state in its economic and human development? This issue of *Insight* explores these questions and makes recommendations for the future.

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*"The Center for Public Policy Research has a track record of promoting sound public policy that benefits the people of our state. Its point of view is respected among corporate leaders, policymakers and citizens. We support the Center because we are confident that the work will be well-researched and effective in enriching dialogue on critical issues."*

**Nancy Temple, Vice President-Corporate Communications, Progress Energy Corporation**

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### Evaluating Government Performance

**Higher Education Governance** – The third in our series of four Center reports on governance of higher education in North Carolina is nearing completion. The report will begin with a brief history of the UNC Board of Governors and then look at the selection of Board members. Currently, the 32 voting Board members are elected by the General Assembly to serve four-year terms with a three-term limit. North Carolina law requires that two of the 16 Board members elected every two years must be women, two must be of a minority race, and two must be of the minority political party. As with all our reports, the Center will discuss advantages and disadvantages of North Carolina's approach and of alternative approaches to our system.

## Board of Directors in 2001

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The report also will look closely at the balance of powers between the UNC Board of Governors and the 16 campus Boards of Trustees. North Carolina and Utah are the only states that give their central governing boards the power to delegate duties to local campus boards. Finally, the report will state the Center's conclusions and may make recommendations that flow from the research.

## Looking Ahead To 2002

The Center already is hard at work to bring you new independent, nonpartisan research in 2002 on important public policy issues facing our state. Here is a preview.

**Education** – The Center is preparing two studies on K-12 education issues – one evaluating North Carolina's experience with charter schools and the other examining the rise in enrollment in non-public school options. In 1996, the legislature authorized the creation of up to 100 charter schools, and 93 now are in operation. After five years, the Center feels the time is right to evaluate the state's experience with this experiment. Also, enrollment in four types of non-public schools is rising – home schooling, private religious schools, other private schools, and charter schools. The Center plans to examine these trends and discuss the implications for both the public schools and the public school reform movement.

**State Election Laws and Voter Participation** – In 2002, the Center will issue a special report on the state's record in voter participation and whether election laws in North Carolina have problems similar to what Florida experienced last year in its election laws, procedures, and voting machines. The study also will examine ways to increase voter participation in North Carolina, which has never been high and has declined steadily since 1960.

**Legislative and Lobbyist Rankings** – In the spring, we will continue our efforts to enhance government accountability and educate voters by publishing the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of *Effectiveness Rankings for Members of the N.C. General Assembly* and the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of *The 50 Most Influential Lobbyists in the General Assembly*.

**Event for Center Members and the Public** – On February 21, 2002, the Center will host a public event at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel in Research Triangle Park. Co-sponsored with Time Warner Cable and the N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association, this event will feature four future political leaders from both parties. We hope you'll join us for an evening of analysis of public policy issues and visions of North Carolina's future.

## Your Ideas

We welcome your suggestions for topics that would benefit from the Center's independent, nonpartisan research. To make a suggestion or to order any Center publication, please write us at **P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602**, call us at **(919) 832-2839**, send us a fax at **(919) 832-2847**, or visit our web site at [www.ncinsider.com/nccppr](http://www.ncinsider.com/nccppr).