North Carolina Insight

$16 April 2003 Vol. 20, no. 3–4


# Voting and Civic Participation

North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

# N.C. Center for Public Policy Research



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**NORTH CAROLINA INSIGHT** is a magazine published by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, Inc. (a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation), Suite 701, 5 W. Hargett St., P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C. 27602. Telephone (919) 832-2839. Annual membership rates: Individual, $36; Organizational, $50; Supporting, $100; Corporate, $200; Full-Service, $250; Corporate Donor, $300; Supporting Corporate, $500; Patron, $1,000; Benefactor, $2,000. Third class postage paid at Raleigh, N.C.  Graphic design by Carol Majors. Production by PUBLICATIONS UNLIMITED. Printed by Theo. Davis Sons, Inc., Zebulon, N.C. The Center is supported in part by grants from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, as well as by 9 other foundations, 160 corporate contributors, and almost 800 individual members across the state. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Center's Board of Directors or staff. Published April 2003. Printed on recycled paper.

Cover photos by Karen Tam

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North Carolina **Insight**

Vol. 20, No. 3–4 April 2003







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# Improving Voter Participation and Accuracy in North Carolina's Elections

by Mike McLaughlin, with Rob Buschmann,
Roberto Obando, Tim Saintsing, Margaret Smith, and Trip Stallings

**Summary**

*The debacle that occurred in Florida's 2000 election brought state and local election administration into focus nationwide. With the glare of the national media on the Sunshine State, election officials in the other 49 states were asking themselves if their election systems could handle a race as close as that between eventual winner and Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush and Democratic nominee Al Gore.*

*North Carolina uses five different types of voting equipment across its 100 counties: paper ballots (two counties); mechanical lever machines (four counties); the punch card system that created so much havoc in Florida (in use in eight N.C. counties—Cabarrus, Duplin, Forsyth, McDowell, Mitchell, Onslow, Vance, and Watauga); direct recording electronic devices (35 counties); and optical scan/ Marksense (51 counties). Unlike Florida, the state has a strong system for recounts and appeals that ultimately has led to a satisfactory resolution of most election disputes that have arisen. Nonetheless, accuracy of the count remains an issue as the state continues to refine its elections administration process.*

*A longer-standing problem in the Tar Heel State is lack of voter participation. The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research examined this issue thoroughly in a 1991 study entitled "Voting in North Carolina: Can We Make It Easier?" The Center made nine recommendations in its previous study, five of which have been adopted in whole or in part. This article revisits the critical topic of voter participation to determine what is different, what remains the same, and what needs to change to vault North Carolina into the top ranks of states in the number of its citizens who cast a ballot on election day.*

*In North Carolina—like most states—voter participation is a two-step process. In order to cast a ballot, North Carolina voters first must register, and voter registration closes a full 25 days before election day. With the advent of the National Voter Registration Act in 1994, North Carolina's percentage of registered voters has soared, with 81 percent of the state's voting age population registered to vote in the 2000 election. However, the gap between the percentage of persons registering and those actually casting a ballot has grown. In the 2000 presidential election, only 50 percent of the state's eligible voting-age population went to the polls, 34th in the nation and just below the national average of 51 percent. In 1988, the state ranked 47th in participation, so the move to 34th could be viewed as an improvement. However, in the 2002 general election, even with an open U.S. Senate race on the ballot, only 36.4 percent of North Carolina's voting age population went to the polls—a dismal turnout but about average in North Carolina for a non-presidential election year.*

*The goal of the Center's research is to explore options for increasing voter participation and to ensure that elections officials can provide an accurate count as more citizens turn out on election day. What can be done to close the gap between registering and voting—or simply to get more North Carolinians to the polls on election day? The Center offers a broad range of recommendations, including shortening the period between the close of registration and election day, encouraging alternatives to election day voting such as one-stop and mail-in absentee voting, and exploring new and longer-range options such as Internet voting.*

*The Center also recommends fine-tuning the administration of elections to ensure an accurate count. These recommendations include modernizing the state's election equipment to eliminate punch card machines and other antiquated methods of voting that increase the possibility of an inaccurate count.*

*The Center was aided in its research by a team of graduate students at Duke University's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy under the tutelage of Professor Art Spengler. The Center wishes to thank these students for their assistance in our research and for co-authoring this report.*

Few can forget the spectacle of the 2000 presidential election in Florida—fevered news conferences under the glare of the national news media, all night counting and recounting of ballots, hanging chads, pregnant chads, and dimpled chads, and dueling court rulings about which ballots to count. In short, the nation witnessed a spectacle that strained the very credibility of a state's election process.

The first thing N.C. election officials ask the public to understand is, North Carolina is no Florida. State Board of Elections Director Gary Bartlett is quick to point out some of the key differences. North Carolina's election officials are appointed. Florida's are elected. North Carolina's elections are overseen and administered by a bipartisan, independent agency. Florida's 2000 presidential election was overseen by an elected secretary of state (the office is now appointed). Florida purged its registration rolls prior to the 2000 election to remove non-compliant registrants. North Carolina didn't. In Florida, this led to numerous voters showing up at the polls thinking they were registered who were no longer on the books. In addition, Florida was not prepared for a surge of first-time voters registered through driver's license bureaus under the National Voter Registration Act. Paperwork that was not properly processed led to people showing up at the polls who were not on local voter registration rolls. North Carolina has long allowed people to register at driver's license offices and did not experience this problem.

Adding to the confusion, Florida did not have an adequate system in place for casting provisional ballots —or ballots that could be held and checked for eligibility later, meaning phone lines and computers were jammed by precinct officials' desperate calls to determine the eligibility of frustrated would-be voters. North Carolina does allow provisional ballots so that people whose names do not show up on the registration rolls can cast their ballots and the ballots will be held and eligibility of the would-be voter verified. The mish-mash of election day mishaps in Florida led to numerous challenges at the Superior Court level. In some instances, the same issues came up in different jurisdictions, and the courts ordered varying means of resolving these disputes. Under North Carolina's procedure, appeals of local election board rulings are made first to the State Board of Elections and then to Wake County Superior Court, leading to greater consistency.

In short, says Bartlett, North Carolina has recount and certification procedures in place that would avoid the chaotic scenario that occurred in Florida. And, if sufficient irregularities are detected, North Carolina's State Board of Elections has the authority to call for a new election—the only board with such authority in the nation, according to Bartlett. That's not to say North Carolina's elections system is absolutely goof-proof. R. Doug Lewis is executive director of The Election Center, a national nonprofit that trains elections officials. As Lewis puts it, "[R]ecognize that what happened in Florida really could have happened to any state. There is not a state in the country that would not have had all its warts exposed under similar circumstances. The issues and particulars may have been somewhat different, but a tie-vote for president in any state would have brought unkind examinations."[1]

What is the structure for conducting elections in North Carolina? Are improvements needed, and, if so, what are they? What about voter participation? Is North Carolina where it should be in that regard? If not, what can be done to improve voter participation?

## Current State of North Carolina's Election Procedures

As is typical across the nation, the duties involved with overseeing elections in North Carolina are divided between state-level and county-level jurisdiction. (These divisions of authority are discussed further below in "Elections Administrators and Their Levels of Oversight," p. 37.) The State Board of Elections has well-defined jurisdiction over many legal aspects of the voting process, including authority to resolve election protests, investigate allegations of fraud, and officially certify election results. The individual county board responsibilities include maintaining voter registration rolls, providing facilities for registra-

*Mike McLaughlin is editor of* North Carolina Insight. *Robert Buschmann, Roberto Obando, Tim Saintsing, Margaret Smith, and Trip Stallings conducted research for this project and co-authored a draft report while they were students at the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University.*

tion and elections, purchasing voting machinery and ballots, testing voting machinery, and training precinct officials. The county boards are quasi-judicial and hear challenges to voter registration, residency challenges, and election protests.

### *State-Level Responsibilities*

With respect to appeals, election administration in North Carolina is largely centralized. All appeals go to the quasi-judicial State Board of Elections and may then be further appealed to the Superior Court in Wake County. The only appeals not handled in this manner are individual voter residency challenges, which are first heard by the county board of elections and then may be appealed to the Superior Court in the county in which the challenge occurs. North Carolina's structure would have created significant differences in the handling of the 2000 presidential election debacle, had it been used in Florida.[2] In Florida, ballot challenges are handled by the courts in the individual county; there is no uniform statewide system for deciding challenges.

North Carolina has statewide uniform ballot recount standards, providing statutory guidelines for how a county conducts a recount. These standards also require recount officials to evaluate voter intent on ballots that are cast in a manner in which tabulators cannot process them. These standards were applied in the 2000 election in a county commissioner's race in Watauga County—a county using punch card technology—that was decided by eight votes. In a machine recount, the apparent winner actually lost by two votes. The loser in the recount called for a mandatory manual hand-eye recount, and the results of the initial recount were upheld by 10 votes. "We became the little Florida for North Carolina, for lack of a better term," says county elections supervisor Jane Ann Hodges. "We had missing chads, dimpled chads, and hanging chads. We had a challenging time. We did the hand-eye recount, but I think we handled it well." While the loser was disappointed in the outcome, nobody questioned the integrity of the election, says Hodges.

In November 2000, the state of Florida did not have specific statewide recount procedures established; the manner in which ballots were recounted was in the control of individual counties. "Florida never did a statewide recount," says Bartlett. "We did two, and there were no challenges." Had centralized guidelines been in place in Florida, there likely would have been better organization of local ballot recount efforts and less disagreement over how ballots were evaluated.

The State Board of Elections in North Carolina also has the authority to order a new election on a


*Dwane Powell, The News & Observer, Raleigh, N.C.*

vote of at least four of the five members of the State Board. Before calling for a new election, the state board must conduct a public hearing displaying sufficient evidence of election irregularities, fraud, or violation of election law. The State Board of Elections may call for a new primary, general, or special election for the entire state, an individual county, electoral district, or municipality. New elections can be called when: (1) the number of ineligible voters casting ballots is significant enough to change the election outcome; (2) voter intent cannot be determined by examining the ballots; or (3) errors that occur are so egregious as to cast doubt on the integrity of the election.[3] Bartlett notes that there were enough irregularities in the Florida election to justify calling for a new election if the same events had occurred in North Carolina.

### *County-Level Responsibilities*

Individual county boards of elections are responsible for the logistics of organizing and carrying out elections. They must register voters and perform ongoing maintenance of voter rolls. The State Board of Elections reviews county registration lists on a monthly basis to assure that no single voter is registered in more than one county, every two months to assure that voters who are deceased have been removed, and on a quarterly basis to remove felons. In the year following two successive congressional elections, statewide voter list maintenance is performed by county boards. The State Election Information Management System (SEIMS) provides a mechanism for ensuring cleaner voter registration rolls.

Each county board is responsible for purchasing and maintaining voting equipment. The ability to replace and update voting equipment depends entirely on budgets adopted by boards of county commissioners. Thus, not all counties use the same type of voting system. Five different voting systems are used in North Carolina: paper ballots, mechanical lever machines, punch card devices, direct recording electronic devices, and optical scan/Marksense. County boards of elections are responsible for printing ballots and registration materials and for testing voting machinery. The state has established minimum guidelines that require testing of no less than 100 percent of voting machines before an election. The precise methodology for performing machine tests is the responsibility of individual county boards.[4]

County boards establish the boundaries of voting precincts as well. Each county board of elections has the authority to establish, rearrange, combine, and discontinue voting precincts when deemed necessary. The individual boards must also locate facilities for holding elections in each precinct and design and provide training for precinct officials guided by minimum requirements established by the State Board of Elections. When precincts are changed, county boards are required to notify affected voters.

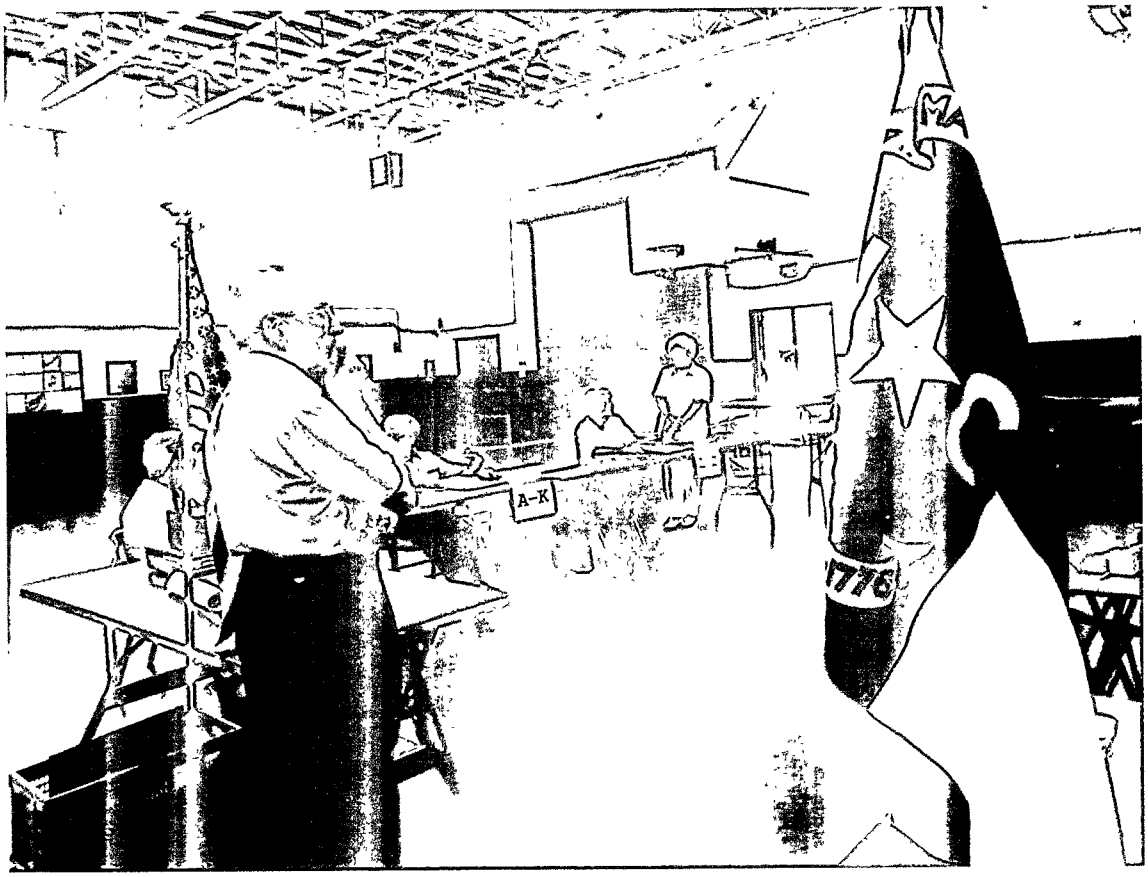
***"[T]here were enough irregularities in the Florida election to justify calling for a new election if the same events had occurred in North Carolina."***

—GARY BARTLETT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, N.C. STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

## Changes to North Carolina's Voting System Since 1991

Several changes have occurred during the past 11 years that have affected North Carolina's voting process. The passage of the National Voter Registration Act in 1993 (commonly known as the Motor Voter Act) expanded voter registration options in all states with voter registration. This legislation allows simultaneous voter registration applications with driver's license applications and renewals, mail applications for voter registration, and expanded options for in-person registration at government agencies such as public libraries, public high schools, and social services agencies. Even before the federal requirement, North Carolina had allowed voter registration at driver's license offices since 1986.[5] However, to accommodate the extra administration resulting from implementing the national law, the 1993 General Assembly increased the registration deadline for North Carolina from 21 days prior to an application to 25 days.[6]

The State Election Information Management System represented another significant change to North Carolina's election systems. This system allows registration rolls to be audited across county lines and allows for more efficient removal of duplicate names and deceased voters from the registry. Currently, 95 counties are using the software required for this system, and five counties—




Karen Tam

***Stephen T. Hearne, chief judge for Alamance County, at the National Guard Armory in Burlington***

Columbus, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, and Wake—are providing the data through other means. Thus, all 100 counties' data are part of the statewide data base.

The composition of voting machinery in use across the state has changed since 1991, shifting away from older methods of voting such as punch cards, lever machines, and paper ballots to modern electronic voting machinery with direct recording electronic technology and optical scan/Marksense technology using electronic scanners. Use of optical scan/Marksense has increased from 36 counties in 1991 to 51 in 2003. Thirty-five counties now use direct recording technology to tally votes. Only eight used this method in 1991. Of those counties still using older technology, eight still use punch cards (down from 18 in 1991), four use mechanical lever machines (compared to 21 in 1991), and two use paper ballots (17 in 1991). Legislation passed by the 2001 General Assembly assures further change in the mix of voting technology used in North Carolina through a bill banning the use of punch card ballots by Jan. 1, 2006.[7] Butterfly ballots are voting booklets used in some punch card machines and made famous in the Palm Beach County, Fla., election dispute when thousands of ballots were thrown out because voter intent was not clear. These were immediately banned in North Carolina, even though no such ballots were in use in the state.[8]

In October and November 2000, North Carolina implemented "early voting" or "no-excuse absentee balloting" statewide for all general elections for the first time.[9] This process allows voters who cannot or prefer not to vote on election day to cast ballots in person at specified locations until four days prior to the election. Voters selecting this method do not need to provide an excuse for voting early, as was previously required with traditional absentee voting. Bartlett believes this move to no-excuse absentee voting has had a significant impact in making voting more convenient and may have increased turnout in the 2000 election, when participation by the state's voting age population increased from 45.6 percent in the previous presidential election in 1996 to 50.2 percent.

***BESSIE. Though one of the happiest days of my life was back in 1920.***
***BESSIE and SADIE. (Together.) when women got the right to vote.***
***BESSIE. Sadie and I registered to vote immediately***
***and we have never missed a chance to vote since.***

—EMILY MANN, *HAVING OUR SAY: THE DELANEY SISTERS' FIRST 100 YEARS*

However, not everyone agrees that allowing voters to cast their ballots early helps turnout. "There is no evidence that no-excuse absentee or early on-site voting helps turnout," says Curtis Gans, executive director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. "There is considerable evidence that it hurts." Gans, who directs a Washington, D.C., think tank that studies voter participation nationally, believes that measures allowing voters to cast ballots early dilute the intensity of the campaign by drawing out the finish over a period of days or weeks rather than having a single, climactic ending on election day.

Most participants who vote early are motivated individuals who would have cast their ballots anyway, Gans asserts. "Early voting . . . actually harms voter turnout," says Gans. "Based on the aggregate turnout of the 13 states which have adopted early voting as opposed to those which have not, the early voting states have lesser turnout increases in years in which the national turnout has increased (1994 and 2000) and greater declines in years of decline (1996 and 1998) than the states which did not adopt these procedures."[10] A similar pattern holds for states that have adopted no excuse absentee voting, notes Gans. Seven states, including North Carolina, have adopted both no excuse absentee voting and early voting. On the whole, these states experienced the same aggregate gains in 2000 over 1996 as the states that did not adopt these procedures—approximately 2.2 percent, and experienced greater decreases in years in which voter participation declined (1996 and 1998).

Nonetheless, North Carolina proved to be an exception to Gans' findings, with its 4.8 percent gain in 2000 over 1996 far exceeding the national gain of 2.2 percent. North Carolina had not yet adopted these reforms in the years Gans referenced in which voter turnout declined. Bartlett was particularly impressed that in 2000, no polling place across the entire state was beset with lengthy lines at closing time. "This was the first time in my career there was not a line in a presidential election at 7:30 on election night," says Bartlett. "It was amazing and very impressive."

## Current Voter Registration and Participation in North Carolina

Political scientists and state elections officials have long debated which registration figures to use in making their case about voter turnout. Elections officials often prefer to use percent of registered voters voting as the standard for discussing turnout. Using registered voter figures produces a higher turnout than voting-age population figures. For example, in the 2000 presidential election, 56.0 percent of North Carolina's registered voters cast a ballot, while the percentage of the voting age population who went to the polls was only 50.2 (see Table 1, p. 9). In the 2002 midterm election, the discrepancy was even more pronounced, with 46.2 percent of registered voters going to the polls compared to only 36.4 percent of the voting age population (see Table 2, p. 11). Those who study problems with people going to the polls prefer to use percentage of voting age population who cast a ballot when discussing voter turnout because it focuses on the true goal—getting people to vote, not just register.

There are problems with both approaches. Percentage of registered voters who go to the polls can be a useful guide, because it tracks turnout among people who have taken the first step that makes them eligible to vote—registering. However, the voter registration rolls include some people who are actually ineligible to vote—those who have moved, died, or are erroneously registered in two different places. There is lag time before names of voters who are no longer eligible are removed, or "purged," from the voter registration rolls, so the lists are generally inflated. This leads to the perception that more people are registered than actually are. The result is that the percentage of registered voters who turn out appears smaller than it

actually is because a percentage of ineligible voters has not been removed—or purged—from the voter registration rolls. Another problem with using percentage of registered voters as a standard is that it targets the wrong goal. The real goal should be to get as many citizens voting as possible.

For these reasons, percentage of voting age population who cast ballots may be a better guide. Although North Carolina's registration percentages have improved greatly over the past decade, relying on percentage of registered voters still leaves out more than a half-million potential voters who are not registered. For the 2000 election, the state had a voting age population of 5,797,000, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Its registered voters numbered only 5,122,123—a difference of 674,877 people. However, it should also be pointed out that not everyone of voting age population is eligible to vote. Some of that population has its legal residence elsewhere—such as U.S. military personnel and legal aliens. College students from out of state may be registered in their home state, so they also inflate the voting-age population, as do illegal aliens and convicted felons who have not had their citizenship restored.

Curtis Gans, executive director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, gets around this problem by adjusting voter turnout figures to remove non-citizens from the voting age population. This results in a slightly higher turnout figure than relying strictly on the voting age population, but still a much lower turnout than would result if he relied on the number of registered voters to determine turnout. For example, in the 2002 non-presidential elections, Gans found the percentage of North Carolinians who voted to be 37.54 percent with non-citizens removed, compared to a turnout of 36.41 percent when non-citizens were included. Regardless of how one handles non-citizens, those who study the electoral process and citizen participation believe the voting-age population figure provides a better standard than percentage of registered voters because it more accurately reflects the real target in measuring voter participation.

### *Registration*

National voter registration rates climbed from just under 58.2 percent to 67.9 percent of the voting-

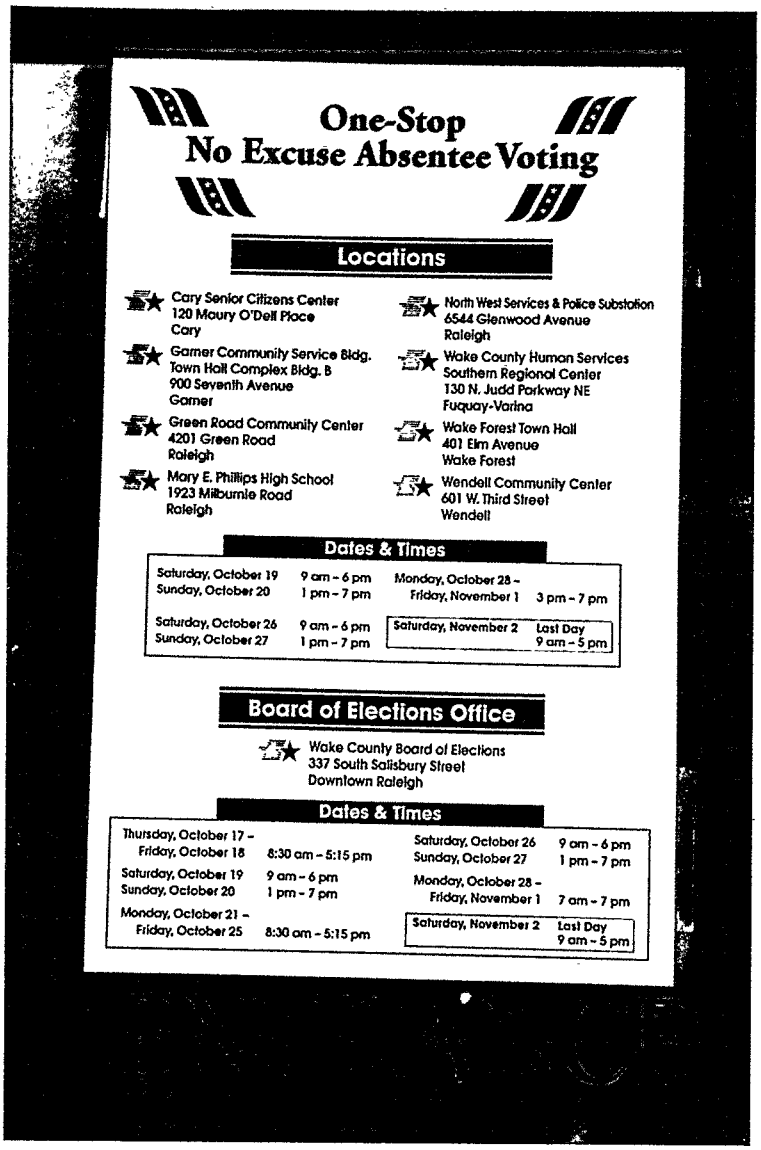
**Table 1. Voter Registration and Participation Rates in *Presidential* Elections, 1960–2000, North Carolina and the Nation**

| North Carolina | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent Registered | n/a | n/a | 63.6 | 66.5 | 65.4 | 64.9 | 71.2 | 69.9 | 73.2 | 78.2 | 81.0 |
| Percent VAP[1] Voting | 52.9 | 52.3 | 54.4 | 42.8 | 43.0 | 43.4 | 47.4 | 43.4 | 50.1 | 45.6 | 50.2 |
| **Nation** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percent Registered | 58.2 | 64.6 | 67.9 | 69.1 | 69.0 | 68.7 | 71.2 | 69.2 | 70.8 | 74.4 | 76.0 |
| Percent Voting | 62.8 | 61.9 | 60.8 | 55.2 | 53.6 | 52.6 | 53.1 | 50.1 | 55.1 | 49.1 | 51.0 |

[1] VAP Voting = Voting Age Population

*Sources:* Federal Election Commission, Center for Voting and Democracy, North Carolina State Board of Elections.

age population between 1960 and 1968 and have fluctuated between 69 percent and 76 percent since then. On the other hand, Federal Election Commission data indicate that North Carolina's registration rates have experienced a notable increase in recent years;[11] since 1988, the state's registration rate has exceeded the nation's (see Table 1, p. 9). State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett says two keys to increased voter registration have been the broadly available mail-in application required by the National Voter Registration Act of 1994, and voter registration in driver's licenses offices, which the state initiated in 1986. In 2000, the state's registration rate increased to 81.0 percent, 5 points higher than the national average of 76.0 percent.



*Karen Tam*

### *Participation*

In most industrialized democracies, participation in national elections hovers around 80 percent of the voting age population, while voter turnout in the United States hasn't exceeded 56 percent since 1968 (see Table 3, p. 12, and Table 4, pp 19–21). Across the 50 states, participation in the 2000 elections ranged from 40.5 percent (Hawaii) to 68.8 percent (Minnesota) of the voting age population (see Table 5, p. 22). In 2000, North Carolina ranked 34th with 50.2 percent of its eligible population voting—just below the national average of 51.0 percent (see Table 5, p. 22). In 1988, the state ranked 47th in participation at 43.4 percent.

While North Carolina's improvement in the national rankings is a move in the right direction, politicians of every stripe agree that 34th in the nation is not a sufficient laurel upon which to rest. "Personally, I think the more people who vote, the better for the democratic process," says Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus), a Senate co-chairman of the North Carolina General Assembly's Election Laws Revision Study Commission. Adds Rep. Donald Bonner (D-Robeson), a House of Representatives co-chairman of the Election Laws Revision Study Commission, "I don't know what it's going to take to get people to turn out and vote and take an interest in who is representing them. It's sad. It's really sad." In the 2002 midterm elections, U.S. Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) ran a series of television advertisements urging North Carolinians to vote no matter which party or candidate they chose to support. Edwards was not on the ballot, but the advertisements probably also aimed to increase his name recognition with future voters. Rep. Joe Kiser (R-Lincoln) used postcard mailers to pursue a similar strategy in his own legislative district.

However, not everyone agrees that merely increasing the quantity of voters is a worthwhile goal. Among those who disagree with this thesis is Sen. Hamilton Horton (R-Forsyth). "It bespeaks a touching, almost mystical, naiveté—a simplistic view that the more votes the better—ignoring the hardheaded view that an ignorant, or uninformed, or prejudiced voter can be harmful in a representative democracy," says Horton. "It seems to me that as long as the *right* to vote is assured, a voter who cannot be bothered to be informed, to study the issues, should be encouraged not to vote and thus avoid possibly canceling out an informed voter. Indeed, those who neglect to vote may be simply acknowledging that they haven't been willing to inform themselves and will let those who are better informed speak for them. Or it may reflect a general satisfaction with things as they are, a passive mandate for the status quo."

## Assessment of the State of Elections in North Carolina

Election laws and procedures are never static. In many respects, the steady evolution of North Carolina's voter registration, participation, and vote tabulation policies reflect this constant change. In 1991, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research made 10 recommendations to get more people registered to vote and, once registered, actually participating in North Carolina elections.[12] Five of these recommendations were implemented in whole or in part, including postcard registration for new voters, a statewide computerized voter registration system, strengthening of the state's motor-voter program, establishment of voter registration programs in a broad array of public agencies such as county departments of social services and public health departments, and easing of restrictions on voting by absentee ballot. North Carolina has gone backwards on one recommendation. Instead of moving the voter registration deadline closer to election day, the state has moved the deadline further away, from 21 days to 25 days.

Indeed, the state's election procedures are stronger now than they were 10 years ago, to the point that some legislators believe that procedures concerning registration and voting are solid and have little to do with low voter turnout. "My feeling is that our registration laws and procedures are such that if somebody out there wants to vote, I don't know of any excuse for them not doing so in terms of the procedures we have in place," says Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham), a member of the Election Laws Revision Commission. "We have some fairly good rules in place," adds Rep. Martha Alexander (D-Mecklenburg), the second House Election Laws Revision Commission co-chair. "We've spent the last couple of years really trying to go through our election laws with a fine-tooth comb to make sure everything is in order." Nevertheless, in a state that's still 34th in voter participation, there is a lot of room for improvement in the current system.

**Table 2. Voter Participation Rates in *Non-Presidential* Elections, 1962–2002, North Carolina and the Nation**

| North Carolina | 1962 | 1966 | 1970 | 1974 | 1978 | 1982 | 1986 | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent VAP[1] Voting | 30.9 | 32.8 | 30.6 | 27.3 | 27.8 | 29.8 | 33.5 | 40.7 | 29.3 | 34.4 | 36.4 |
| **Nation** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percent VAP Voting | 47.4 | 48.4 | 46.8 | 38.3 | 37.8 | 40.1 | 36.4 | 36.4 | 38.5 | 35.3 | 35.0 |

[1] VAP Voting = Voting Age Population

*Sources:* Federal Election Commission, Committee for the Study of the American Electorate

## Table 3. Voter Turnout in 20 Democracies— 1970s, 1980s, 1990s

| | Average Turnout as Percentage of Eligible Population | | | Compulsory Voting | Mandatory Requirement To Register |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1990s) | (1980s) | (1970s) | | |
| Italy | 90 % | 90 % | 94 % | Yes | Automatic[1] |
| Belgium | 84 | 94 | 88 | Yes | Automatic |
| Sweden | 84 | 89 | 88 | No | Automatic |
| Australia | 83 | 94 | 86 | Yes | Yes |
| Germany | 83 | 87 | 85 | No | Automatic |
| Spain | 79 | 75 | 78 | No | Automatic |
| Austria | 78 | 91 | 88 | No | Automatic |
| Norway | 76 | 83 | 82 | No | Automatic |
| Netherlands | 75 | 85 | 82 | No | Automatic |
| Denmark | 72 | 86 | 85 | No | Automatic |
| United Kingdom | 72 | 74 | 75 | No | No |
| Finland | 71 | 74 | 82 | No | Automatic |
| Ireland | 71 | 72 | 77 | No | Automatic |
| France | 61 | 72 | 78 | No | No |
| Canada | 60 | 73 | 68 | No | Automatic |
| Switzerland | 38 | 47 | 44 | No | Automatic |
| New Zealand | n/a | 89 | 83 | No | Yes |
| Israel | n/a | 79 | 80 | No | Automatic |
| Japan | n/a | 71 | 72 | No | Automatic |
| ***United States*** | ***45 %*** | ***54 %*** | ***54 %*** | ***No*** | ***No*** |
| U.S. Rank Among Democracies | 16 of 17 | 19 of 20 | 19 of 20 | | |
| **North Carolina** | **48 %** | **45 %** | **43 %** | **No** | **No** |

[1] Countries with automatic registration do not require citizens to initiate the registration process. They are automatically registered to vote when they reach voter age.

*Sources*: Thomas T. Mackie, *The International Alamanac of Electoral History.* Fully revised 3rd ed., Congressional Quarterly, Washington, D.C., 1991

Center for Voting and Democracy, Takoma Park, Md., on the Internet at *www.fairvote.org*

## Improving Voter Registration Rates

The main reason voter registration exists in the United States is to prevent election fraud. In a basic sense, registration lends legitimacy to elections by assuring that everyone gets one vote and only one vote. A pair of 1973 Supreme Court decisions reinforces this viewpoint, as the court upheld Arizona's and Georgia's 50-day registration deadlines on the basis of state interest in determining whether voters could legitimately vote.[13] Registration also ensures that certain polling areas don't get overloaded, allowing the state to disperse precincts over its geography so that all who register are able to vote close to home and within a reasonable time period. With an idea of how many voters each precinct will serve, the local boards of elections can prepare as needed.

From its inception, however, registration served another purpose: exclusion. Throughout American history, registration has been used to keep certain groups from voting. Over time, this mentality allowed states to prevent immigrants, the poor, African Americans, and other groups from casting their votes. Others, such as women and youth ages 18–21, were ineligible as a matter of law. During Reconstruction and well after, many Southern states used registration laws as a means of disenfranchising African Americans. Practices included literacy tests, poll taxes, property ownership requirements, and "an extraordinary repertoire of inventive techniques ranging from trickery and fraud to outright violence."[14] For African Americans, registration became an insurmountable barrier to voting, and their voter turnout in the first half of the twentieth century reflected those problems. Southern states suffered from very low turnout compared to the rest of the nation. In 1960, the first year that reliable voter registration and turnout data were reported nationwide, Louisiana had a 45 percent turnout as a percentage of voting age population, Alabama 31 percent, South Carolina 30 percent, Georgia 29 percent, and Mississippi was at 25 percent, last among the 50 states. North Carolina fared relatively better, with 52.9 percent of the voting age population going to the polls, but still trailed the national average by a substantial amount. The national average that year was 63 percent.[15] (See Table 1, p. 9, for turnout in North Carolina and the nation for presidential elections from 1960 through 2000.)

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## Nationwide Registration Reform

The twentieth century has seen a great deal of voting reform, and registration has become less of a barrier. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 directly addressed registration barriers that had disenfranchised minorities, particularly African Americans. The law streamlined voter registration procedures and eliminated many of the barriers for African Americans in the South. Southern states experienced higher increases in voter turnout from 1964 to 1968 than other areas of the nation. According to FEC data, by 1968 Louisiana voter turnout as a percentage of the voting age population had increased some 10 percent, Georgia 15 percent, South Carolina 16 percent, Alabama 22 percent, and Mississippi 28 percent. (North Carolina, with higher voter turnout before the legislation compared to its Southern neighbors, increased by only 1.5 percent.) But the Voting Rights Act's impact is difficult to quantify because the increase in voter turnout and registration cannot be attributed only to civil rights legislation. Some of the increase must be attributed to the politically charged decade of the 1960s.

Efforts in the 1970s to enact additional voter registration reforms failed. Experts in the early 1980s extolled the virtues of making voter registration more accessible. Among them were R.E. Wolfinger and S.J. Rosenstone, who in their oft-cited 1980 study *Who Votes?* found that for the 1972 presidential elections, registration reform would have had a considerable impact: "If every state had had registration laws in 1972 as permissive as those in the most permissive states, turnout would have been about 9 percent higher in the presidential election," they write." [16] One reform alone—permitting registration until the day of the election, would have increased turnout approximately 6.1 percent, according to this analysis.[17]

Wolfinger and Rosenstone further argue that relaxing the registration deadline would have changed the characteristics of the voting population only marginally. The main impact would have been expanding the overall numbers going to the polls. "The number of voters would increase, but there would be virtually no change in their demographic, partisan, or ideological characteristics. They would be more numerous, but not different."[18]

U.S. Census reports note that while the overall voting rate declined from 1964 to 1980 by 8.9 percent, from 52.3 percent to 43.4 percent, turnout by registered voters declined only two points, from 91 percent to 89 percent, indicating that registered voters voted more even when turnout declined. The 1984 National Election Study, which conducted random sampling polls and checked election records to verify responses, confirmed this result.

International experience further bolstered the arguments of registration reformers. A 1983 symposium sponsored by Harvard University and ABC News entitled "Voting for Democracy" brought voting data from 24 developed countries into the spotlight. Of those 24 countries, the United States ranked 23rd in voting age population participating in the most recent national elections. However, the U.S. tied for 7th in percentage of registered voters who voted. Data from two other sources ranks the United States 19th among 20 developed democracies in voter turnout over three decades—the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s—above only Switzerland. (See Table 3, p. 12.) For two of those decades, North Carolina trailed even Switzerland, according to these sources. The Harvard University-ABC News symposium report recommended that "money, energy, and political capital should be devoted to getting people registered, on the amply documented assumption that once they register, they vote."[19]

After years of agitation, voting rights organizations scored a major victory. On May 20, 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA, informally known as the "Motor Voter" Act). The act's key provisions:

- Required the Federal Election Commission to develop a national mail-in voter registration form;
- Established that voters' names may not be removed from the registration rolls merely because they do not vote; and
- Authorized applications for, or renewals of, driver's licenses to serve as voter registration.

While NVRA technically applied only to federal elections, North Carolina, as a matter of administrative convenience, applied them to state and local elections as well. For those in favor of raising registration rates as much as possible on the assumption that voter turnout will follow, NVRA appeared to offer the greatest opportunity for that to happen. In terms of broadening and expanding the American electorate, supporters saw NVRA as holding almost as much potential as the Voting Rights Act.

## The National Voter Registration Act

NVRA undoubtedly increased voter registration. According to the FEC, active voter registration rates in states covered by the NVRA increased by 3.72 percent in the four years after the bill was passed. States reported a total of 140,946,508 registered voters nationwide in 1998, amounting to 70.15 percent of the nation's voting age population and the highest percentage of voter registration in a mid-term election since 1970.

Voter turnout, however, declined in those same four years from 39 percent of the voting age population in 1994 to 36 percent in 1998. According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, turnout in the Southern states declined slightly more than the rest of the nation, falling from 34 percent in 1994 to 31 percent in 1998.[20] In presidential elections, voter turnout dipped to under 50 percent in 1996, the lowest percentage in a presidential election since 1924. In the 2000 election, turnout rebounded to 51 percent, still more than four percentage points lower than turnout in 1992. In addition, some studies have shown that NVRA actually increased the gap between those who vote and those who don't vote in terms of class, age, and race.[21] This was particularly distressing to proponents of registration reform, who before those studies could at least say that while increased registration may not increase turnout, it might change the composition of the electorate in the United States to one that better reflects the actual population.

It has long been argued in the United States that the people who actually vote do not represent a true cross-section of American society. Even with registration barriers reduced, minorities, the poor, and the young traditionally have been a lower portion of the electorate than of the population in general. As former *North Carolina Insight* Editor Jack Betts wrote in a comprehensive look at reforming the state's system of voting published by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research in 1991, "Who votes? They are older, white, well-educated, and affluent citizens. Those who do not vote are the young, minorities (including African Americans), Latin Americans, Asians and other groups, the poor, and those without college degrees—which means that older, white, educated, and well-off citizens have more direct control of who gets elected


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"I THOUGHT YOU SAID OL' RUFF WAS REGISTERED. SO HOW COME HE CAN'T VOTE.TOO?"

and how governments are run." [22] Six years after every state was required to comply with the National Voter Registration Act, the act failed to meet sponsors' expectations that it would broaden the electorate. Why, after all the evidence, did increased registration appear to do nothing to increase turnout?

One explanation is that it did increase turnout—that those states that had implemented the law earlier than required by the federal government experienced a lesser decrease in voter turnout than those that implemented the law poorly or later. Voter turnout is affected by a multitude of factors, and cycles are common depending on whether the election includes a presidential race, who the candidates are, how hotly contested the election is, and the state of the national economy. The National Voter Registration Act might have served as a buffer against an overall downturn in voter turnout in the last decade.

Another explanation is that the relationship between registration and voter turnout is not reliable. After NVRA, registering was no longer an intentional act to make sure one could vote in the next election; it was just another form to fill out at the license bureau. Registration became so much less burdensome, in fact, that it lost its close statistical relationship with actual voting. Voting remains the act of dutiful citizens or those truly interested in grassroots political activity. As a result, a wedge has been driven between voter registration numbers and voter turnout: being registered no longer signifies a real interest in politics and elections any more than having a driver's license does.

Rep. Martha Alexander (D-Mecklenburg) is among those who believe that first-time registrants may not be making the connection between registering and actually casting a ballot. "If I had never voted before and never registered, it might just go right over me," says Alexander. "There's not a connection there." She believes that registration drives should also include a nonpartisan plea that the registrant actually vote, as well as guidance as to how to do so.

Of course a number of groups in North Carolina and the nation have worked hard to encourage citizens to both register and vote. These include the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, Vote for America, and "many issue-based organizations that spend considerable amounts of time attempting to register citizens, educate them about the process, and otherwise help them to cast a vote," says Chris Heagarty, executive director of the N.C. Center for Voter Education, a Raleigh, N.C., nonprofit that focuses on elections issues.

Rep. Joe Kiser (R-Lincoln), a former county sheriff, believes that the National Voter Registration Act may be taking in registrants at drivers' license bureaus who never intended to vote but also are not comfortable saying no to the uniformed officer who offers them the chance to register. "Motor Voter has probably registered a lot of people who didn't intend to vote and won't vote anyway," says Kiser. "I call it the uniform factor. They're waiting there, hoping to get their drivers' license, and thinking, 'Will this help me?'"

Kiser believes there is ample opportunity for those willing to exercise their civic duty and cast a ballot. "As we go through life, we find the time to do the things we want to do," says Kiser. "Everyone has 24 hours a day. Some people would rather fish than vote. If I want to politic, I find the time."

There are additional theories on why voter turnout has declined in the face of increasing national registration. One theory suggests that Americans are less involved in social networks than they ever have been—they go to church less, talk to neighbors less, connect with their families less.[23] Less association with other people leads to less concern with things that don't directly affect the individual and his or her ever-shrinking community, and thus less concern with politics, which at election time may emphasize national issues rather than local ones. On the other side of that

coin is the notion that Americans have lost faith in politics itself to accomplish anything: "Americans . . . have lost their confidence in the effectiveness of their actions. They have also lost their attachment to electoral politics: Americans are less satisfied with the electoral choices offered them, and, indeed, had less good to say even about the parties and candidates they favored than in the 1960s."[24]

One oft-cited reason for suppressed turnout is negative advertising. "I don't think people want to hear bad things about people," says Kiser, "particularly when they are half truths."

Another frequently mentioned concern is that voters no longer believe their vote will make a difference. "Why don't more people vote?" asks Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus). "I think in a lot of ways a lot of people do not believe the results of elections will impact their lives. It's not a pressing matter of concern."

Sen. Wib Gulley (D-Durham) says the typical would-be voter believes the electoral system now is driven by money and power politics. "They [the voters] won't come back until they believe their voice and their vote makes a difference." Gulley believes reforms in campaign finance and public financing of elections hold the key to reinvigorating democracy in America.

Yet another problem could be that the very politicians who are capable of changing registration laws could be actively ignoring the problem. Incumbents have little incentive to change the composition of the electorate that voted for them and to enfranchise new people who may not vote for them in the next election. As a result, the organizations that really could mobilize potential voters—political parties—have failed to act. A variation on this theme is that it is the lack of competitive elections that is dampening participation by voters. The party in power manipulates congressional and legislative districts to make them as safe for the incumbent as possible, which reinforces the message that there is little point in voting.

The only remaining incentive is something akin to what happened in the 1960s, a social movement that motivates people to vote in order to bring about change. After years of fighting for registration reform, Piven and Cloward came to this conclusion:

> [Increased voter turnout] is more likely to [occur] because a new surge of protest, perhaps


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***[S]tates with registration deadlines closer to elections tend to have higher turnout rates. . . . Looking at only the 2000 election data, for each day the deadline for registration is farther away from election day, there is approximately a 0.4% decrease in voter turnout.***

accompanied by the rise of minor parties and electoral cleavages that both movements and minor parties threaten, forces political leaders to make the programmatic and cultural appeals, and undertake the voter recruitment, that will reach out to the tens of millions of Americans who now remain beyond the pale of electoral politics.[25]

## What Can Government Do To Increase Registration?

Targeting particular groups that are not voting could be perceived as favoritism of specific social groups, which is politically objectionable in some quarters. However, there is some evidence that government can change the way registration is done without favoring one political group over another.

If one takes a snapshot of voter turnout rates in 2000 in all 50 states and compares that with registration laws in those states, two distinct patterns emerge. First, states with registration deadlines closer to elections tend to have higher turnout rates. Each state sets a registration deadline a certain number of days prior to the election to process changes to the registration rolls. In some states, this period is as long as 30 days, and in others it is as short as 10; in North Carolina the deadline is firmly in the middle at 25 days prior to Election Day—the same as New York and closer to election day than 25 other states. Six states have a "split system" in which registration deadlines exist before election day, but voters are also allowed to register to vote at the polling site on election day. North Dakota has no state voter registration requirements at all. Looking at only the 2000 election data, for each day the deadline for registration is farther away from election day, there is approximately a 0.4% decrease in voter turnout. This statistic can be misleading, however, since it is difficult to tell how individual states have been affected over time by registration deadline changes.

The second distinct pattern is that states with election day registration have significantly higher turnout rates than those without that option. Although only six states have election day registration in place—Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, the average turnout of the voting age population among those states in 2000 was 63 percent, while the national average was 51 percent (see Table 6, p. 27). In addition, four states that have election day registration—Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and New Hampshire, ranked in the top ten states in turnout in 2000, and all six were above average. The six states also exceeded the national average in 1996—the first year in which Idaho, New Hampshire, and Wyoming offered election day registration in a presidential election. Maine, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have exceeded the national average in voter turnout every presidential election since these states debuted election day registration for presidential balloting in 1976. These turnout figures suggest that states can increase voter turnout by moving registration deadlines closer to election day and allowing election day voter registration.

However, these figures must be used cautiously. While they can tell us that certain registration laws are correlated with higher turnout rates, they tell us nothing about how those laws affected turnout in states when they were instituted. In order to determine direct effects, future research may need to analyze the voter turnout statistics over time in individual states and try to match changes in those statistics with changes in registration laws. Since no state tracks what influenced an individual's decision to go (or not to go) to the polls, teasing out effects of registration changes is extremely difficult.

Curtis Gans, executive director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, agrees that states with election day registration do experience greater voter participation than do

*—continued on page 23*

## Table 4. Percent of Voting Age Population Participating in Presidential Elections by State, 1960–2000

| State | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | Number Voting 2000 | Total Voting Age Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Total | 62.8 | 61.9 | 60.8 | 55.2 | 53.6 | 52.6 | 53.1 | 50.1 | 55.1 | 49.1 | 51.0 | 105,083,352 | 205,404,000 |
| **North Carolina** | **52.9** | **52.3** | **54.4** | **42.8** | **43.0** | **43.4** | **47.4** | **43.4** | **50.1** | **45.6** | **50.2** | **2,910,017** | **5,797,000** |
| Alabama | 30.8 | 36.0 | 52.7 | 43.3 | 46.3 | 48.7 | 49.9 | 45.8 | 55.2 | 47.7 | 50.0 | 1,665,688 | 3,333,000 |
| Alaska | 43.7 | 44.0 | 50.0 | 46.9 | 48.1 | 57.2 | 59.2 | 52.0 | 63.8 | 56.9 | 64.4 | 276,749 | 430,000 |
| Arizona | 52.4 | 54.8 | 49.9 | 47.4 | 46.1 | 44.4 | 45.2 | 45.0 | 52.9 | 44.7 | 42.1 | 1,526.880 | 3,625,000 |
| Arkansas | 40.9 | 50.6 | 54.2 | 48.1 | 51.1 | 51.5 | 51.8 | 47.0 | 53.6 | 47.2 | 47.8 | 921,642 | 1,929,000 |
| California | 65.8 | 65.4 | 61.1 | 59.5 | 50.4 | 48.9 | 49.6 | 47.4 | 49.4 | 43.9 | 44.0 | 10,947,474 | 24,873,000 |
| Colorado | 69.7 | 68.0 | 64.8 | 59.5 | 58.8 | 55.8 | 55.1 | 55.1 | 60.8 | 52.8 | 56.8 | 1,742,198 | 3,067,000 |
| Connecticut | 76.1 | 70.7 | 68.8 | 66.2 | 62.8 | 61.0 | 61.1 | 57.9 | 64.5 | 56.2 | 58.3 | 1,457,558 | 2,499,000 |
| Delaware | 72.3 | 69.0 | 68.3 | 62.1 | 57.2 | 54.6 | 55.5 | 51.0 | 55.6 | 49.4 | 56.3 | 327,507 | 582,000 |
| Florida | 48.6 | 51.2 | 53.1 | 48.6 | 49.2 | 48.7 | 48.2 | 44.8 | 51.0 | 48.0 | 50.6 | 5,962,941 | 11,774,000 |
| Georgia | 29.3 | 43.3 | 43.9 | 37.3 | 42.0 | 41.3 | 42.0 | 38.8 | 46.2 | 42.4 | 43.8 | 2,583,488 | 5,893,000 |
| Hawaii | 49.8 | 51.3 | 53.8 | 49.4 | 46.7 | 43.5 | 44.3 | 43.0 | 41.9 | 40.5 | 40.5 | 372,310 | 909,000 |
| Idaho | 79.7 | 77.2 | 73.3 | 63.3 | 60.7 | 67.7 | 59.9 | 58.3 | 65.2 | 57.1 | 53.7 | 494,470 | 921,000 |
| Illinois | 75.5 | 73.2 | 69.3 | 62.3 | 59.4 | 57.7 | 57.1 | 53.3 | 58.9 | 49.3 | 52.8 | 4,742,344 | 8,983,000 |
| Indiana | 76.3 | 73.5 | 73.0 | 60.8 | 60.1 | 57.6 | 55.9 | 53.3 | 55.2 | 48.8 | 49.1 | 2,181,970 | 4,448,000 |
| Iowa | 76.5 | 72.9 | 69.8 | 64.0 | 63.1 | 62.8 | 62.3 | 59.3 | 65.3 | 57.7 | 60.7 | 1,314,505 | 2,165,000 |

*—continues*

## Table 4, *continued*

| State | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | Number Voting 2000 | Total Voting Age Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kansas | 69.6 | 65.1 | 64.8 | 59.5 | 58.8 | 56.6 | 56.8 | 54.3 | 63.0 | 56.1 | 54.0 | 1,071,641 | 1,983,000 |
| Kentucky | 57.7 | 53.3 | 51.2 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 49.9 | 50.8 | 48.2 | 53.7 | 47.4 | 51.7 | 1,546,796 | 2,993,000 |
| Louisiana | 44.6 | 47.3 | 54.8 | 44.0 | 48.7 | 53.1 | 54.6 | 51.3 | 59.8 | 57.0 | 54.2 | 1,765,656 | 3,255,000 |
| Maine | 71.7 | 65.1 | 66.4 | 60.3 | 63.7 | 64.5 | 64.8 | 62.2 | 72.0 | 71.9 | 67.4 | 652,418 | 968,000 |
| Maryland | 56.5 | 54.1 | 54.4 | 49.8 | 49.3 | 50.0 | 51.4 | 49.1 | 53.6 | 46.6 | 51.4 | 2,018,836 | 3,925,000 |
| Massachusetts | 75.6 | 70.0 | 67.4 | 62.0 | 61.7 | 59.0 | 57.6 | 58.1 | 60.2 | 55.0 | 56.8 | 2,698,783 | 4,749,000 |
| Michigan | 72.2 | 67.9 | 65.7 | 59.4 | 58.8 | 60.0 | 57.9 | 54.0 | 61.7 | 54.4 | 57.4 | 4,227,111 | 7,358,000 |
| Minnesota | 76.4 | 75.8 | 73.8 | 68.7 | 71.5 | 70.0 | 68.2 | 66.3 | 71.6 | 64.1 | 68.8 | 2,438,763 | 3,547,000 |
| Mississippi | 25.3 | 33.9 | 53.3 | 44.2 | 48.0 | 51.8 | 52.2 | 49.9 | 52.8 | 45.4 | 48.6 | 993,846 | 2,047,000 |
| Missouri | 71.5 | 67.1 | 64.3 | 57.3 | 57.3 | 58.7 | 57.3 | 54.8 | 62.0 | 54.0 | 57.5 | 2,359,457 | 4,105,000 |
| Montana | 70.3 | 69.3 | 68.1 | 67.6 | 63.3 | 65.0 | 65.0 | 62.4 | 70.1 | 62.1 | 61.5 | 411,083 | 668,000 |
| Nebraska | 70.6 | 66.5 | 60.9 | 56.4 | 56.2 | 56.6 | 55.6 | 56.7 | 63.2 | 55.9 | 56.3 | 695,039 | 1,234,000 |
| Nevada | 58.3 | 52.1 | 54.3 | 49.5 | 44.2 | 41.2 | 41.5 | 44.9 | 50.0 | 38.3 | 43.8 | 608,964 | 1,390,000 |
| New Hampshire | 78.7 | 72.4 | 69.6 | 63.6 | 57.3 | 57.1 | 53.0 | 54.8 | 63.1 | 57.3 | 62.3 | 567,715 | 911,000 |
| New Jersey | 70.8 | 68.8 | 66.0 | 59.8 | 57.8 | 54.9 | 56.6 | 52.2 | 56.3 | 51.0 | 51.0 | 3,185,737 | 6,245,000 |
| New Mexico | 61.7 | 62.0 | 60.7 | 57.7 | 53.4 | 50.1 | 51.3 | 47.4 | 51.6 | 45.4 | 47.4 | 598,630 | 1,263,000 |
| New York | 66.5 | 63.3 | 59.3 | 56.4 | 50.7 | 48.0 | 51.2 | 48.1 | 50.9 | 47.5 | 49.3 | 6,811,467 | 13,805,000 |

## Table 4, *continued*

| State | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | Number Voting 2000 | Total Voting Age Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Dakota | 78.0 | 72.0 | 70.0 | 68.3 | 67.2 | 64.6 | 62.7 | 61.5 | 67.3 | 56.0 | 60.4 | 288,321 | 477,000 |
| Ohio | 70.7 | 66.6 | 63.3 | 57.3 | 55.1 | 55.3 | 58.2 | 55.1 | 60.6 | 54.3 | 55.7 | 4,699,246 | 8,433,000 |
| Oklahoma | 63.1 | 63.4 | 61.2 | 56.7 | 54.9 | 52.1 | 52.2 | 48.7 | 59.7 | 49.7 | 48.8 | 1,123,252 | 2,531,000 |
| Oregon | 72.0 | 68.9 | 66.6 | 62.1 | 61.3 | 61.3 | 61.8 | 58.6 | 65.7 | 57.1 | 60.5 | 1,530,346 | 2,530,000 |
| Pennsylvania | 70.3 | 67.9 | 65.3 | 56.0 | 54.2 | 51.9 | 54.0 | 50.1 | 54.2 | 49.0 | 53.7 | 4,913,342 | 9,155,000 |
| Rhode Island | 75.1 | 71.6 | 67.2 | 61.0 | 59.7 | 58.6 | 55.9 | 53.0 | 58.4 | 52.0 | 54.2 | 407,911 | 753,000 |
| South Carolina | 30.4 | 39.4 | 46.7 | 38.3 | 40.3 | 40.4 | 40.7 | 38.9 | 45.0 | 41.6 | 46.5 | 1,385,392 | 2,977,000 |
| South Dakota | 77.6 | 74.2 | 73.3 | 69.4 | 64.1 | 67.2 | 62.6 | 61.5 | 67.0 | 60.5 | 58.2 | 316,262 | 543,000 |
| Tennessee | 49.9 | 51.7 | 53.7 | 43.5 | 48.7 | 48.7 | 49.1 | 44.7 | 52.4 | 46.9 | 49.2 | 2,075,674 | 4,221,000 |
| Texas | 41.2 | 44.6 | 48.7 | 45.0 | 46.3 | 44.8 | 47.2 | 44.2 | 49.1 | 41.3 | 43.1 | 6,406,870 | 14,850,000 |
| Utah | 78.2 | 78.4 | 76.7 | 69.4 | 68.4 | 64.6 | 61.6 | 60.0 | 65.2 | 49.9 | 52.7 | 772,213 | 1,465,000 |
| Vermont | 72.4 | 70.3 | 64.1 | 60.7 | 55.7 | 57.7 | 59.8 | 59.1 | 67.5 | 58.1 | 63.7 | 293,206 | 460,000 |
| Virginia | 32.8 | 41.1 | 50.1 | 44.7 | 47.0 | 47.5 | 50.7 | 48.2 | 52.8 | 47.5 | 52.0 | 2,736,331 | 5,263,000 |
| Washington | 71.9 | 71.8 | 66.0 | 63.1 | 59.8 | 57.3 | 58.1 | 54.6 | 59.9 | 54.8 | 56.9 | 2,486,064 | 4,368,000 |
| West Virginia | 77.9 | 75.5 | 71.1 | 62.5 | 57.2 | 52.7 | 51.7 | 46.7 | 50.7 | 44.9 | 45.7 | 647,773 | 1,416,000 |
| Wisconsin | 72.9 | 69.5 | 66.5 | 62.5 | 66.5 | 67.4 | 63.5 | 62.0 | 69.0 | 57.4 | 66.1 | 2,596,707 | 3,930,000 |
| Wyoming | 73.3 | 74.3 | 67.0 | 64.4 | 58.6 | 53.2 | 53.4 | 50.3 | 62.3 | 59.4 | 59.7 | 213,759 | 358,000 |

*Sources:* Federal Election Commission, Center for Voting and Democracy (on the Internet at *www.fairvote.org*).

## Table 5. Ranking of States Based on Voting Age Population (VAP) Turnout, 2000 Elections

| Rank | State | % VAP Voted |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Minnesota[1] | 68.8 |
| 2 | Maine[1] | 67.4 |
| 3 | Wisconsin[1] | 66.1 |
| 4 | Alaska | 64.4 |
| 5 | Vermont | 63.7 |
| 6 | New Hampshire[1] | 62.3 |
| 7 | Montana | 61.5 |
| 8 | Iowa | 60.7 |
| 9 | Oregon | 60.5 |
| 10 | North Dakota | 60.4 |
| 11 | Wyoming[1] | 59.7 |
| 12 | Connecticut | 58.3 |
| 13 | South Dakota | 58.2 |
| 14 | Missouri | 57.5 |
| 15 | Michigan | 57.4 |
| 16 | Washington | 56.9 |
| 17 | Colorado | 56.8 |
| tie | Massachusetts | 56.8 |
| 19 | Delaware | 56.3 |
| tie | Nebraska | 56.3 |
| 21 | Ohio | 55.7 |
| 22 | Louisiana | 54.2 |
| tie | Rhode Island | 54.2 |
| 24 | Kansas | 54.0 |
| 25 | Idaho[1] | 53.7 |
| tie | Pennsylvania | 53.7 |
| 27 | Illinois | 52.8 |
| 28 | Utah | 52.7 |
| 29 | Virginia[2] | 52.0 |
| 30 | Kentucky | 51.7 |
| 31 | Maryland | 51.4 |
| | ***National Average*** | ***51.0*** |
| 32 | New Jersey | 51.0 |
| 33 | Florida | 50.6 |
| **34** | **North Carolina** | **50.2** |
| 35 | Alabama | 50.0 |
| 36 | New York | 49.3 |
| 37 | Tennessee[2] | 49.2 |
| 38 | Indiana | 49.1 |
| 39 | Oklahoma | 48.8 |
| 40 | Mississippi | 48.6 |
| 41 | Arkansas | 47.8 |
| 42 | New Mexico | 47.4 |
| 43 | South Carolina[2] | 46.5 |
| 44 | West Virginia | 45.7 |
| 45 | California | 44.0 |
| 46 | Georgia[2] | 43.8 |
| tie | Nevada | 43.8 |
| 48 | Texas | 43.1 |
| 49 | Arizona | 42.1 |
| 50 | Hawaii | 40.5 |

[1] Six states with Election Day Registration

[2] Four states bordering North Carolina

*Sources:* Center for Voting Democracy and Federal Election Commission

—*continued from page 18*
states such as North Carolina that close the books well in advance of elections.

But Gans does not believe participation would automatically rise if registration laws were liberalized. "The states with liberal registration laws had higher turnout than other states before they liberalized their laws because of the nature of the states rather than the nature of their laws," he says.

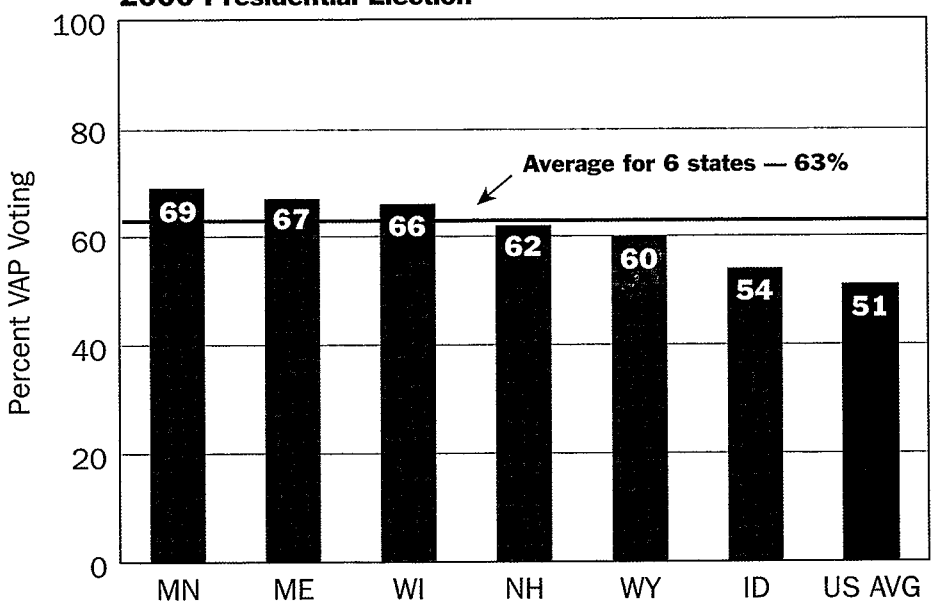
And, Gans is wary of making wholesale changes without taking into account a state's past record regarding voter fraud. "There is evidence that shortening the time between the close of registration and elections does help turnout," says Gans. "But election day registration needs to be handled with great care. Unless there is no history of fraud in a state (and North Carolina, by my experience as a resident of Buncombe and Haywood counties, does not indicate a lack of fraud), the only way to protect against fraud is for everyone registering on election day to cast a provisional ballot to be checked later and delaying the results."

Despite the fact that states with election day registration have above-average voter participation, N.C. State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett does not believe that moving voter registration deadlines closer to or even to election day would have a significant impact on turnout. He does, however, note two exceptions: when John McCain defeated George W. Bush in the 2000 New Hampshire Republican presidential primary, and when Jesse Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota in 1998. Both benefited from a surge in election day registration. The late developing interest in McCain, Bartlett says, resulted in a 17 percent increase in turnout. "It made the campaign last six to eight months longer than it normally would have," says Bartlett. "I don't think Bush liked it." Democrats, he says, were equally troubled by the late-breaking interest in Jesse Ventura that helped him seize the Minnesota governor's mansion.

## What Can North Carolina Do To Increase Voter Registration?

It is probably no coincidence that the states with historically high voter turnout have registration deadlines closer to election day than does North Carolina. Easing the registration deadline closer to election day is likely to increase turnout in North Carolina, a state that has long trailed the national average. Ultimately, the goal should be election

**Turnout in States with Election Day Registration, 2000 Presidential Election**




*Note:* North Dakota does not have voter registration. Average turnout for states with election day registration in 2000 was 63 percent, a 12 percent margin over the national average of 51 percent.

***Squally Election Day, a few drops pebbling,***
***The hood; we wanted a bite to eat but wanted***
***To vote, to get back to vote; although not voting***
***Counted, too. . . .***

—STEPHEN SANDY, "THE HEART'S DESIRE OF AMERICANS"
ELECTION DAY IN 1980 WAS NOVEMBER 4. STEPHEN SANDY
WAS RETURNING FROM BOSTON TO BENNINGTON, VERMONT, TO VOTE.

day registration—as is available in four of the nation's top 10 states in voter turnout (all six states with election day registration exceed the national average in turnout). However, Bartlett indicates there are obstacles to shortening the time between the close registration and elections. "The most important reason for the cutoff is, it freezes in time where people are," says Bartlett. That allows elections officials time to verify the eligibility of new registrants and to make sure there are enough ballots printed to accommodate 100 percent of eligible voters in every precinct.

One oft-mentioned obstacle to election day registration is concern about voter fraud. "I don't think I'd be in favor of that," says Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham). "It'd be too easy to abuse. If you allowed people to show up who had never registered and voted, you'd be inviting problems." Berger also points out that establishing an election-day registration system would be costly and would dilute the electorate with less informed voters. However, some state lawmakers believe election-day registration—with appropriate precautions against fraud—would be worth the risk.

Robert Hunter, former chairman of the State Board of Elections, says the implementation of election day registration effectively would remove the opportunity to challenge would-be voters who are fraudulently or doubly registered. "Assuming that a person has fraudulently registered or doubly registered, then in that event, a voter can challenge the registration and the election judges or the county board can have a hearing on these challenges," says Hunter. "This cannot as a practical matter be done until the close of the registration process." For example, says Hunter, in the 1980s postcards mailed by election officials to some registrants in Wake County to verify their addresses turned out to have gone to vacant lots, "yet a number of voters who voted [fraudulently] used that address as their home. Election day registration effectively eliminates the role of challenges. No party or person can challenge such votes post election. The problem of voting fraud is real and is not theoretical in close elections."

However, others are more supportive of election day registration. "If we can protect against fraud, I think it's something we ought to do," says Sen. Wib Gulley (D-Durham). "I feel very experimental. I think we ought to be innovative in this area." Adds Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus), "I'd rather have an informed voter, but the nature of democracy is, whether you're informed or not, you ought to vote."

Bartlett remains open to the prospect of election day registration, though says it would require a "massive amount of work." The mechanics are not currently in place to run election-day registration, but that could be changed, says Bartlett. "Give me a little time, give me a little more money and people, and election day registration can work," says Bartlett. "Unless something is extravagantly bad, we want as much open access as possible. We don't try to throw up any roadblocks. If that's something that members of the General Assembly want, we will do our best to make it happen."

In addition to moving the registration deadline closer to election day, the state may need to undertake a campaign to promote both the importance of voter registration and places where voters can register, as well as the availability of the National Voter Registration Form, a universal form produced by the FEC and available on the State Board of Elections website at *www.sboe.state.nc.us.* The form, available in both English and Spanish, can be downloaded, filled out, and faxed or mailed to the local board of elections office.

Indeed, Bartlett believes North Carolina's greatest need in increasing voter registration and turnout is a massive voter education campaign.

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## North Carolina State Board of Elections

**New on the State Board of Elections Site:**

- **Click here to view the November 2002 General Election Results**
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**Welcome** to North Carolina's State Board of Elections Web Site. We hope you find this site contains useful information that helps you take a more informed role in the democratic process.

The State Board of Elections is the state agency charged with overall responsibility for administration of the elections process and campaign finance disclosure in North Carolina. It is the only statutory bi-partisan, quasi-judicial supervisory board in North Carolina State government. The Governor of North Carolina appoints the five members of the Board.

The agency's mission is to promote consistent administration and equal application of all elections and campaign finance laws, rules, and regulations.

The State Board of Elections is supported by a 20-member professional staff overseeing day-to-day operations of the State Board office in Raleigh (administration and campaign reporting).

**Register To Vote In Your State By Using This Postcard Form and Guide**

**For U.S. Citizen**

**Voter Registration Application**
**For U.S. Citizens**

You can use this form to
- register to vote
- report that your name or address has changed
- register with a party

Please print in blue or black ink

This space for office use only

1 Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms. Last Name | First Name | Middle Name(s) | (Circle one) Jr Sr II III IV

2 Address (see instructions)— Street (or route and box number) | Apt. or Lot # | City/Town | State | Zip Code

3 Address Where You Get Your Mail If Different From Above (see instructions) | City/Town | State | Zip Code

4 Date of Birth Month / Day / Year | 5 Telephone Number (optional) | 6 ID Number (see item 6 in the instructions for your State)

7 Choice of Party (see item 7 in the instructions for your State) | 8 Race or Ethnic Group (see item 8 in the instructions for your State)

9 I swear/affirm that
- I am a United States citizen
- I meet the eligibility requirements of my state and subscribe to any oath required

(See item 9 in the instructions for your state before you sign.)
- The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, I may be fined, imprisoned, or (if not a U.S. citizen) deported from or refused entry to the United States

Please sign full name (or put mark) | Date Month / Day / Year

10 If the applicant is unable to sign, who helped the applicant fill out the application? Give name, address and phone number (phone number optional)

Fold here

***Please fill out the sections below if they apply to you.***

If the application is for a change of name, what was your name before you changed it?

A Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms. Last Name | First Name | Middle Name(s) | (Circle one) Jr Sr II III IV

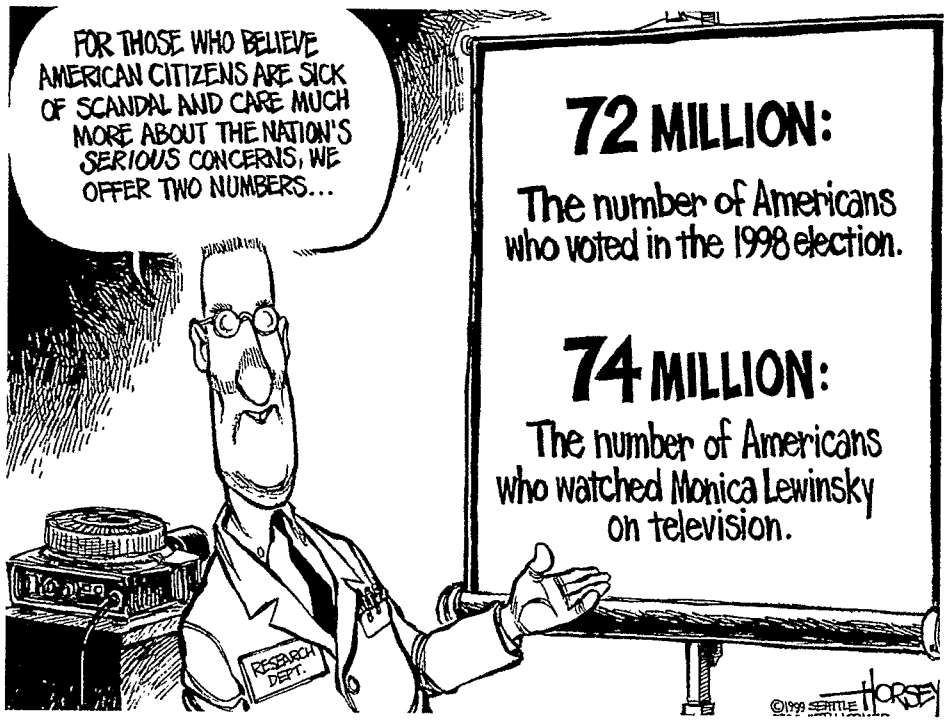
If you were registered before but this is the first time you are registering from the address in Box 2, what was your address where you were registered before?

B Street (or route and box number) | Apt. or Lot # | City/Town | State | Zip Code

If you live on a rural area but do not have a street number, or if you have an address, please show on the map where you live
- Write in the names of the crossroads (or streets) nearest to where you live
- Draw an X to show where you live
- Use a dot to show any schools, churches, stores, or other landmarks near where you live, and write the name of the landmark.

C Example: Route #2 | Grocery Store | Woodchuck Road | Public School | X | NORTH

**To Mail:** 1 Address the back of the application (see address under your state) 2 Remove plastic strip below 3 Fold form at middle and seal at top 4 Put on a first class stamp and mail




*David Horsey, reprinted with special permission*

"The best way to get participation up is to have voter outreach programs in which there would be more readily available information for voters to, one, make their choices and, two, understand the process of registering and voting. What we lack top to bottom in North Carolina is any vehicle to provide voter education. It is a void that needs to be filled in this state." Bartlett says the State Board of Elections had initially explored regional partnerships with community colleges to provide these voter education drives but the effort was sidelined by budget constraints.

In the fall 2002 edition of *Popular Government*, the magazine of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Government, Bartlett and IOG faculty member Robert Joyce argue the strengths of North Carolina's elections administration system versus those of Florida's. But they also point to some weaknesses and make recommendations for addressing those weaknesses. Among them are recommendations to: "Involve universities, community colleges, and public school systems in supplementing the training of precinct workers and in providing civics education to all citizens," and "Improve voters' education on the importance of voting and on the basics of where to vote, how to vote, and in what districts they reside."[26]

One resource for educating the state's young people as to their civic duty to register and vote is the state's public schools. Debra Henzey, executive director of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, believes the schools could make a stronger effort. "There is a curriculum," says Henzey. "It's just that it's not very consistent. It's spotty." Students get a strong dose of North Carolina history in the fifth and eighth grades, but the courses focus too little on the present and what students can do to get involved and address issues of the day. One positive is that students in the state's high schools get the opportunity to register to vote two to three times a year.

Henzey advocates more service learning in the public schools to get students out of the theoretical and into the community. (Ran Coble discusses a model service learning program operating in Argentina on pp. 86–91 of this issue.) But Henzey says involving students in such efforts as voter registration drives can be risky. In one instance, an educator wanted students to observe her county's voter registration process to see if it was a friendly process. The school board attorney advised that the activity could be viewed as partisan and could bring embarrassing attention on the school or the school board. The project was dropped. "We have decent bones of a curriculum," says Henzey. "What's missing is the meat, and the meat is the strategies."

## Increasing Voter Turnout in North Carolina Elections

Registration levels in North Carolina and across the nation have risen consistently in recent years, but voter participation lags far behind (See Table 1, page 9). For instance, in 1996, although 74 percent of the country's voting-age population was registered, only 49 percent voted—a gap between registration and participation rates that has been growing steadily since 1964. The percent of eligible registered voters in North Carolina for 1996 (78 percent) was actually higher than the national rate, but participation rates (46 percent) were below the national average. One could argue that North Carolina's low turnout in 1996 was due to low interest in that year's presidential election, but even in the more closely contested 2000 election only 50 percent of the voting-age population in North Carolina voted. In comparison, voters in other states and democracies around the world vote at higher rates with some regularity (see Table 3 for international turnout rates).

As important to the process as ease of voting are voter confidence in the system and the ability of voters to adapt to new methods of voting. Piven and Cloward suggest that the failure of political parties to encourage voter participation also plays a significant role in low turnout numbers: "[L]ower turnout seems to be associated with the fact that Americans are less embedded in social networks that encourage participation . . . . In time, the attitudes of the marginalized [non-voters] come to reflect their disaffection with a party system that pays them little heed."[27]

North Carolina, then, may be able to address only part of the problem of participation through legislation. Nevertheless, the state can make some improvements that hold potential to increase voter turnout. The state already has altered its absentee ballot procedures to allow no-excuse, one-stop absentee voting within a set period ending the Saturday before the election. Two new methods of voting—Internet voting and voting by mail—could improve participation in North Carolina. Other possibilities for improving voter participation

### Table 6. Participation Rates of Voting Age Population in Presidential Elections (1960–2000) of Seven States with Election Day Registration or No Registration Compared to U.S. and N.C.

| | 1960 | 1964 | 1968 | 1972 | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *United States* | *62.8* | *61.9* | *60.8* | *55.2* | *53.6* | *52.6* | *53.1* | *50.1* | *55.1* | *49.1* | *51.0* |
| **North Carolina*** | **52.9** | **52.3** | **54.4** | **42.8** | **43.0** | **43.4** | **47.4** | **43.4** | **50.1** | **45.6** | **50.2** |
| Minnesota | 76.4 | 75.8 | 73.8 | 68.7 | 71.5 | 70.0 | 68.2 | 66.3 | 71.6 | 64.1 | 68.8 |
| Maine | 71.7 | 65.1 | 66.4 | 60.3 | 63.7 | 64.5 | 64.8 | 62.2 | 72.0 | 71.9 | 67.4 |
| Wisconsin | 72.9 | 69.5 | 66.5 | 62.5 | 66.5 | 67.4 | 63.5 | 62.0 | 69.0 | 57.4 | 66.1 |
| New Hampshire | 78.7 | 72.4 | 69.6 | 63.6 | 57.3 | 57.1 | 53.0 | 54.8 | 63.1 | 57.3 | 62.3 |
| North Dakota** | 78.0 | 72.0 | 70.0 | 68.3 | 67.2 | 64.6 | 62.7 | 61.5 | 67.3 | 56.0 | 60.4 |
| Wyoming | 73.3 | 74.3 | 67.0 | 64.4 | 58.6 | 53.2 | 53.4 | 50.3 | 62.3 | 59.4 | 59.7 |
| Idaho | 79.7 | 77.2 | 73.3 | 63.3 | 60.7 | 67.7 | 59.9 | 58.3 | 65.2 | 57.1 | 53.7 |
| Average for these seven states (excludes N.C.) | 75.8 | 72.3 | 69.5 | 64.4 | 63.6 | 63.5 | 60.8 | 59.3 | 67.3 | 60.5 | 62.6 |

* North Carolina requires voters to register at least 25 days before elections.

** North Dakota does not require voters to register before casting their ballots. Election day registration took effect in 1974 in Maine and Minnesota, in 1976 in Wisconsin, and in 1994 in Idaho, New Hampshire, and Wyoming.

*Source:* Federal Election Commission

include declaring election day a holiday, voting on a weekend day, establishing time-off-without penalty voting, and extended voting hours. What are the pluses and minuses of these methods?

## Internet Voting

The rapid spread of Internet connections nationwide has fueled an equally rapid adoption of the medium as a means for gathering and disseminating information. Perhaps not surprisingly, ballot-casting on the Internet is gaining support as one solution for closing the gap between registration and participation. Should North Carolina consider Internet voting to encourage greater voter participation? A 2001 National Science Foundation (NSF) report concluded that, given the current state of technology, Internet voting presents too many risks to implement completely, but the NSF encouraged states to experiment with controlled Internet voting at polling sites where elections officials could oversee the process.[28] A handful of states are making preparations for just such an experiment. In 2002, the North Carolina legislature authorized a study committee to examine various issues concerning Internet voting, including cost, security, and accessibility for various demographic groups, and report to the 2003 General Assembly. However, the committee did not meet prior to the 2003 session, and whether it will be reauthorized is in question.

No state has converted exclusively to Internet voting, but two states—Arizona and Alaska—experimented with it in the 2000 presidential primaries by enlisting the aid of new companies that offer Internet voting products and systems. These companies are Election.com and Votehere.net. Arizona's 2000 Democratic primary and Alaska's 2000 Republican *non-binding* primary offered Internet voting as an option for participation, but results were mixed. Arizona, which in recent Democratic primaries saw turnout rates among registered Democrats between 1.5 percent (1996) and 4.3 percent (1992), experienced a significant increase to over 10.5 percent in 2000. Almost half the votes in Arizona's 2000 primary election were cast via the Internet.[29] Though turnout did increase, the experiment drew criticism as providing greater access to affluent, white voters who are more likely to have Internet access in the home. Results were not as promising in terms of turnout in Alaska, where only 35 votes were cast via the Internet, several of which originated in the Alaska congressional offices in Washington, D.C.[30]

At least a dozen other states have requested studies of Internet voting,[31] and six states are examining or have examined the possibility (California, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Washington). In one of the largest implementation


Karen Tam

studies, a task force sponsored by the California Secretary of State recommended that the state move forward cautiously with Internet voting by approaching it in four progressively less restrictive stages: (1) in the first stage, the state would provide an Internet voting option at every precinct, with voters registered at that precinct allowed to cast ballots; (2) next it would allow a voter to vote via the Internet at any polling station, regardless of whether the voter was registered at that precinct; (3) then the state would establish multiple-location voting kiosks outside the traditional polling site where persons could cast an Internet vote; and (4) in the final stage, it would allow voting via the Internet from home.[32]

Each stage would be followed by a full evaluation to gauge success and security. The California task force believes this progression would provide a secure path to voting via the Internet and would allow the state to solve most problems before the system went into full effect with at-home Internet voting. Also, it would allow the state to stop the process altogether if Internet voting became susceptible to fraud or otherwise untenable. Most significantly, it would allow time for the spread of Internet access to reach all strata of society before full implementation.

The North Carolina study commission—if it had convened—was charged to examine: (1) the state of technology regarding Internet voting; (2) the experience of other states and other jurisdictions in the use of on-line voting; (3) the comprehensibility of the process to the average voter; (4) accessibility issues that might affect different types of voters; (5) concerns about security and privacy; and (6) cost.[33]

Despite this range of issues, Bartlett predicts that the state will at some point turn to Internet voting. "Internet voting is going to be a way of life in our lifetime, but not in the immediate future," notes Bartlett.

Others strike a more pessimistic tone. "Internet voting is not likely to happen nor should it," says Curtis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. "Unless we reach the level of 100 percent security on software reliability, protection against viruses and hackers, and personal privacy, you cannot entrust . . . the future of the state and nation to the real uncertainties of computer technology."

Before fully implementing Internet voting, the state would need to attend to a number of concerns. Ultimately, Internet voting could offer the dual benefit of vote-from-home convenience and almost-instantaneous tabulation, but it also would present many implementation challenges. Beyond the practical limitations of the expense of equipment upgrades, staff retraining, and hiring, the State Board of Elections would need to address four issues raised by the California Internet Voting Task Force and other similar studies:

(1) *Accessibility*: The disappointing usage rate in Alaska points out a major potential problem with Internet voting feared by critics: private Internet access is currently limited to a certain class of citizens who can afford the service and the equipment (mostly white middle- to upper-class voters). Internet-only voting would disenfranchise voters without access, and even voting in which the Internet is merely one of many options may still lead to a disproportionate representation from one stratum of the society, given that middle- to upper-class white voters will have more voting options on average than other groups. While Internet voting also could be offered from remote locations such as community centers and libraries, thus broadening accessibility for disadvantaged groups, this still would not match the convenience of voting from home. A 1999 U.S. Department of Commerce study reported that about 30 percent of white, non-Hispanic households have Internet access, compared to only 11 percent of African American households and 13 percent of Hispanic households.[34] The report did not provide detailed analysis by state, but other studies have indicated broad variation in the percentage of households with Internet access and even home computers in North Carolina counties.[35] A 1999 study by the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology, for example, found that 45 percent of households in the Southeastern North Carolina counties of Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, New Hanover, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland counties had home computers compared to 68 percent of households in Research Triangle Park area counties. In its research on infrastructure needs of Eastern North Carolina, the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research found greater Internet access to be one such pressing need.[36]

(2) *Variable acceptance of the security and reliability of the system by age group*: This problem may be the most important in terms of how much of an effect Internet voting could have on election participation. Results from the Arizona primary may be somewhat misleading; while the increase in participation is impressive, it may not reflect an increase in all demographic categories. Voters who do not trust the safety and efficacy of the system are more likely to avoid voting, and that

subgroup is more likely to be older and less familiar with computer technology. Disenfranchisement of older voters may result.[37] However, older voters already vote in higher numbers than younger voters. While they may not choose to vote over the Internet, they likely would continue to vote in high numbers through more traditional means. Thus, it would be necessary to continue to offer these traditional options for casting a ballot as well as the Internet option until a time in the future when the age differential in Internet usage disappeared.

(3) *Ballot security and voting integrity*: No voting system currently guarantees complete security or integrity, as Florida's 2000 election showed. Elections officials would need to guard against attacks on Internet voting machines and attacks on election computer systems. With no way to determine visually whether the person voting is the registered voter or someone else who has gained access to the registered voter's ballot, Internet voting also has the potential for vote fraud via multiple voting, vote-selling, vote solicitation, and voter coercion. "What's missing is the digitalized signature," says Bartlett. "There is a lot of controversy as to whether we have the ability to have a secure situation." There currently is little identity checking at North Carolina's polling places, but voting from remote locations could multiply the potential for abuse.

Of equal concern is the issue of recounts: remote Internet voting leaves no paper trail. One report even declares that, at this time, "[T]here is no way that a public election of any significance involving remote electronic voting could be carried out securely."[38]

Larry Leake, chairman of the State Board of Elections and an Asheville attorney, believes voting via the Internet opens the door to rampant voter fraud. "Please bear in mind there are two policy interests; to wit, to encourage voter participation and to frustrate fraud," notes Leake. "In my judgment, both same day registration, and in particular, Internet voting, leave us exposed for rampant voter fraud."

Bartlett, for one, does not believe North Carolina should embark on an Internet voting experiment until these concerns can be ironed out. Still, he says Internet voting ultimately will be a reality in North Carolina. "We want to be on the leading edge, not the bleeding edge," he says. "I don't think it's going to happen in this decade, but sooner or later."

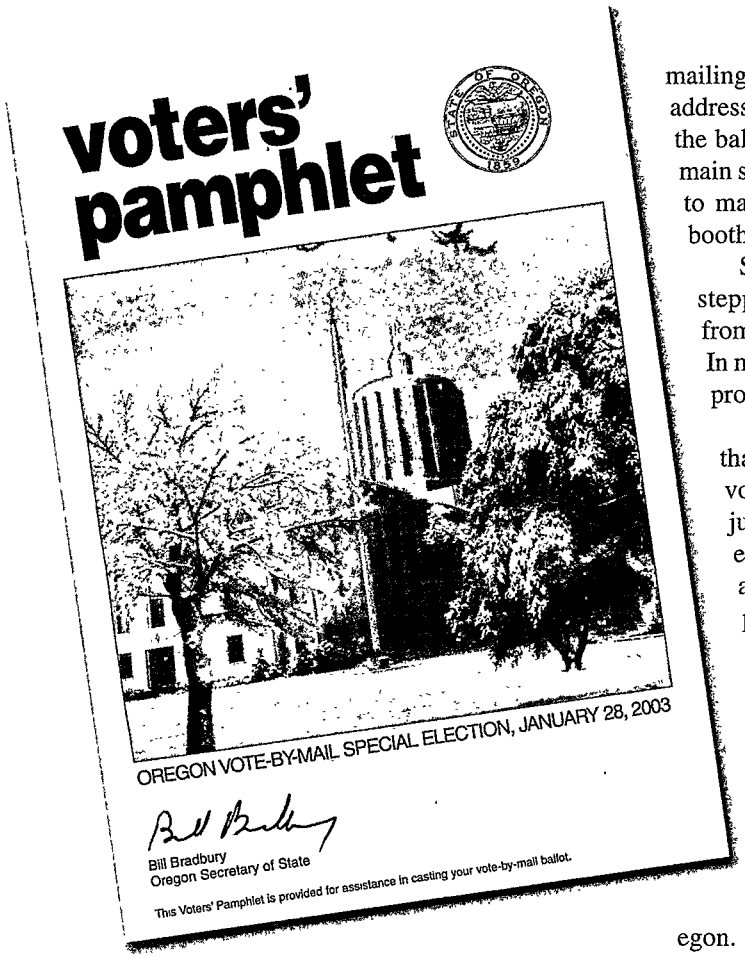
(4) *Computer glitches*: The success in Arizona was tempered by this problem, which critics of Internet voting fear will always make such a system unstable. Untold numbers of voters were unable to cast ballots because of programming glitches. Joe Mohen, chief executive of *Election.com*, which carried out Arizona's primary, says the company worked "around the clock" to try to resolve problems, but was plagued by too many voters with very old versions of Netscape.[39]

Independent observers such as the Voting Integrity Project and R. Doug Lewis, executive director of the Election Center (both are national, non-partisan, organizations dedicated to voter rights and election integrity), also have voiced concerns about the process, as has the Washington state deputy director of elections. As the Alaska experiment demonstrated, it is not even certain that participation rates would climb after a switch to Internet voting. Even vendors of Internet voting systems have their doubts about the Internet's ability to raise participation rates. "I don't believe [Internet voting] will increase participation that much," says David Brady, a political scientist at Stanford University and a member of the Board of Directors for *Election.com*.[40] Clearly, before attempting to adopt an Internet voting option, North Carolina would have to develop a plan and responses to these concerns.

## Voting by Mail

Voting by mail is another possibility for increasing voter participation in North Carolina. Although not a new voting concept and not uncommon in venues like corporate elections (for instance, stockholders typically vote by mail), voting by mail as a means to increase participation in statewide or national elections is a relatively new phenomenon.

Currently, only Oregon uses the mail as its primary means of casting a ballot. Extensive research and preparation went into Oregon's total conversion from polling-site voting. The process, begun in 1981, was not adopted statewide for fifteen years and was subjected to numerous tests along the way.[41] The state's most highly publicized vote by mail experiment was its all-mail special U.S. senatorial election in 1996. In that contest, more than 1.2 million Oregonians cast a ballot by mail, a participation rate of 66 percent of registered voters. Though the participation rate has cooled in more recent elections (reaching a low of 38 percent of registered voters for a special statewide election in 1999,[42] the lowest turnout for an election of that type since the introduction of voting by mail), pub-




lic response overall has been positive. The 2000 presidential election represented Oregon's first all-mail general election, and the state's 60.5 percent turnout of the voting age population represented a small increase over the 57.1 percent turnout in 1996, and well above the national average of 51 percent.

An alternative to Oregon's mail-only voting is Washington's no-excuse absentee voting process, which essentially allows anyone to vote by mail without providing a reason, and North Carolina now has decided to allow this as well. Washington state introduced no-excuse absentee voting-by-mail in 1993, and the move was followed by a steady increase in the number of voters choosing this means to cast their ballots; in 2000, more than half of all ballots cast in Washington state were by mail.[43] California is yet another state that allows voters to cast a vote by mail without giving a reason or excuse, and voters may opt to have an absentee ballot sent to them for each election in which they are eligible to vote.

In Oregon's vote-by-mail elections, votes are placed in an envelope without any identifying documents. That envelope is then placed inside the mailing envelope. Election workers separate the addressed envelope and the envelope containing the ballot so that the voter's name and vote remain separate. Also, anyone who does not want to mail in the ballot can submit it at special booths across the state set up to collect ballots.

Some advocates see voting by mail as a steppingstone toward acceptance of voting from home via computer, television, or phone. In many ways the processes have benefits and problems similar to those for Internet voting.

Advocates of voting by mail suggest that it may close the gap between registered voters and participating voters, though the jury is still out on whether this is so. For example, 57.1 percent of Oregon's voting age population cast ballots in the 1996 presidential election, but in 2000—the first year Oregon operated an all vote-by-mail system for a presidential election—Federal Election Commission statistics indicate that participation climbed to 60.5 percent, above the U.S. average of 51 percent. Yet Curtis Gans, executive director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, argues that the turnout was not impressive for Oregon. "The turnout for the general election was the third lowest for presidential general election in Oregon's history," writes Gans. "And there were 18 states in the nation which had greater turnout increases than Oregon, none of which adopted all-mail voting."[44] Gans had categorized Oregon as a "battleground state" in which the presidential race was highly competitive, so he had anticipated that turnout would be above average. In the 2002 general election, 49.5 percent of Oregon's voting age population mailed in ballots—far better than the nation's 35 percent voter turnout though not particularly strong for an off-year election in civic-minded Oregon.[45]

Another benefit of the process is the opportunity voting by mail gives voters to become well informed about all issues on the ballot. The ballot typically arrives weeks before election day, giving voters a chance to study the issues and candidates on the ballot and make more informed decisions. Voters also receive an issues pamphlet distributed to everyone who is registered and in multiple languages. The pamphlet includes biographies of candidates, their self-ascribed positions on the issues, and the pros and cons of any questions on the ballot to be decided by the voters. Similar pamphlets are distributed to voters in Alaska, California, and

Washington, and some parts of Minnesota, New York, and Texas, according to Curtis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. These can be a huge voter education tool, providing those who receive them the opportunity to be informed about the candidates and issues confronting them on the ballot.

Gary Bartlett, executive director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections, says a similar pamphlet providing information on candidates and issues could be distributed to every voter household in North Carolina for approximately $1.5 million per election cycle. "Any information that could be provided by some source that would be party or candidate neutral can be beneficial," says Bartlett. Such a pamphlet ultimately could be coupled with vote by mail ballots if the state broadened its reliance on such a system.

One of the biggest draws of voting by mail is that it eliminates long lines at the polls, something many non-voters say is a major disincentive. Administrative costs also are cheaper than traditional polling-site elections.

A 1996 study sponsored by the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Oregon identified the following additional positive results from that state's by-mail election for the U.S. Senate:

- 77 percent of voters preferred voting by mail to polling place elections;
- Fewer than 1 percent felt their vote was coerced by those around them;
- In general, the demographics of vote by mail were the same as that of polling place voters. Any differences tended to favor traditionally underrepresented voters (such as minorities, younger voters, and voters of lower socio-economic status); and
- Requiring the voter to supply the postage had little or no adverse effect on participation.[46]

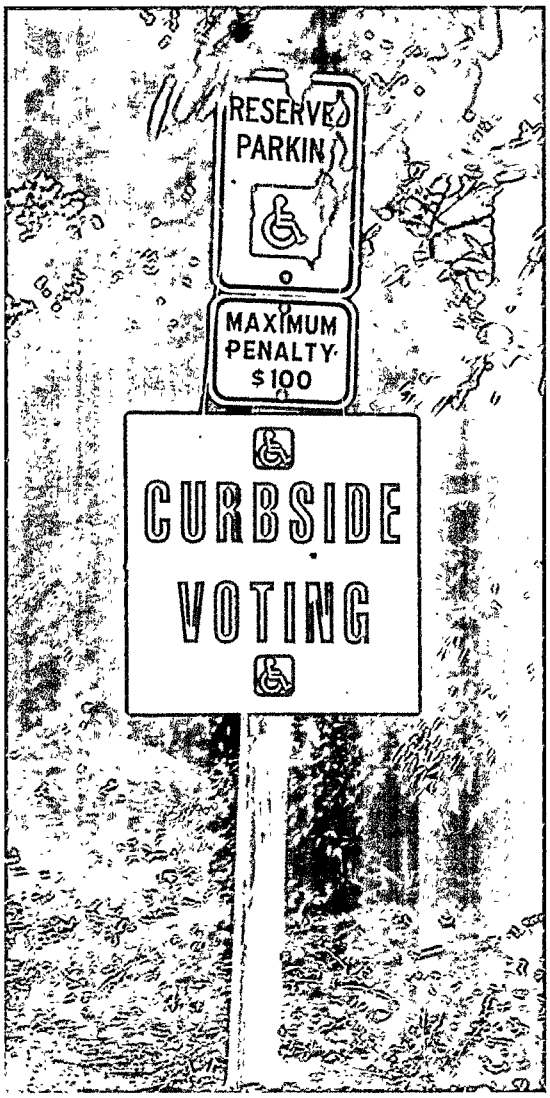
Voting by mail is not without drawbacks. Concerns with voting by mail include increased potential for fraud—though protections are in place to assure that the voter's signature matches the one on file at the board of elections office, risk of influence of the voter by third parties, and disproportionate effects in voting patterns on different subgroups of the population. Another concern is the time it takes to count mail-in votes. In the 2000 election, Oregonians voted in high numbers, but many of them waited until the last minute (8 p.m. on election day) to submit their votes, leading to a rush that overwhelmed elections officials.[47] This problem has been growing worse with each election conducted by mail.[48] Last-minute ballot-casting might not seem like a problem given that paper ballots all across the country are tallied overnight, but for mail-in voting systems, each signature must be checked against one already on file. As a result, Oregon tallies were not finalized until a full three days after the election.[49]

While Oregon has the most extensive vote-by-mail program in the nation, it is not the only state faced with challenges in tallying the vote. "I was in Los Angeles County and observed the counting of the votes by mail," says Robert Hunter, the former State Board of Elections chairman. "It requires a great deal of infrastructure and the decision-making on whose vote is counted would be unbelievable to N.C. election officials and politicians. Essentially, the signatures are checked against computer file signatures and a decision is made by an hourly employee of the board. There are no reliable standards. An all mail system would be a nightmare to administer or to verify for the parties and candidates. It would increase the lack of confidence in the election process, not increase confidence."

## Voting Holidays, Time-Off Arrangements, and Extended Voting Hours

Long lines at polling places can make it difficult for workers to find the time to vote during the workday. For those with early work hours or children to get to school, the polls may not yet be open, while workers with limited lunch breaks may not be able to cast a ballot and return to work on time. Even with polling places open as late as 7:30 p.m., there is often a crush of voters at the polls after working hours, which may make voting less appealing. Three possible responses to this dilemma are: (1) to make election day a state or national holiday, (2) to encourage employers to allow workers to take time off from work without penalty on election day to cast their votes, or (3) to extend voting hours. These ideas are not new in North Carolina—two statewide races were held on the weekend in 1964—but the state does not provide any of these options currently.[50] One nonpartisan, nonprofit group, Vote for America N.C., is seeking voluntary agreements from businesses to provide their employees compensatory time for voting, according to Executive Director Susan Hansell, but so far the group has found few takers.

Proposals at the national level have called for everything from making election day a new holiday to moving President's Day to the first Tuesday in November during presidential election years. Twelve states already recognize election day as a holiday. Thirty-one states allow some time off for voting for *state* employees; 27 states have legislation about the maximum amount of time an employee in the *private* sector can take off without penalty (see Table 7 for a list of holiday voting and time-off-with-pay laws, by state). In North Carolina, polls are open from 6:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m., though counties have the authority to remain open longer to accommodate lines at closing time. Senate Bill 122, sponsored by Sen. Hugh Webster (R-Caswell) in the 2001–2002 session of the General Assembly, would have extended voting hours to 9 p.m., but the bill died in the N.C. Senate Judiciary II Committee.




Karen Tam

It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of measures such as paid time off and extended voting hours in improving voter participation. Since most of these reforms were implemented before participation records were kept, it is often not possible to calculate changes in voter turnout after implementation. It is worth noting that North Carolina is one of only 14 states that has no voting holiday or time-off arrangement. However, of the top five states in participation in the 2000 presidential election as a percentage of the voting-age population—Minnesota, Maine, Wisconsin, Alaska, and Vermont, none observed election day as a holiday, two of five (Minnesota and Alaska) provided state employees time off to vote, and three of five (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Alaska) required private employers to provide time off for voting.

Politics, of course, play a role in decisions such as whether to grant time off for voting. For example, Republican legislators in North Carolina might object to time off for state employees to vote since they are thought to vote predominantly Democratic. Democratic legislators might object to time off just for the private sector since Republicans poll well with this group of voters.

Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) is among those lawmakers who oppose mandatory paid time off for voting for either group. "Most employers make sure their employees are able to vote," says Berger. "Philosophically, I would have a little bit of a problem with mandating private business to do that sort of thing. There may be some people who work from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., but I can't believe they don't get a lunch hour." Berger says those who absolutely can't get to the polls on election day can vote early or absentee.

Sen. Wib Gulley (D-Durham) takes the opposite tack. "I think time off for voting is a fine concept," says Gulley. "Voting is such a vital part of democracy that no one should be penalized at their workplace for participating." While employers have a natural concern that mandated time off could have an impact on workplace efficiency, Gulley says it is not necessarily the case that everyone has the time to vote. "Some people work overtime, and just because they're not at work doesn't mean their time is free," says Gulley. "It's a clash of priorities, but democracy should take precedence."

Gary Bartlett, director of the N.C. State Board of Elections, says he does not see the need for a state holiday for voting, as casting a ballot usually does not take that long. Bartlett would like to see election day declared a teacher workday, with teachers receiving credit for helping out at the polls.

## Table 7. Holiday Voting and Time-Off-With-Pay, by State, 2000

| Rank | State | % VAP Voted 2000 | Election Day Holiday?[1] | Give State Employees Time Off To Vote? | Give Private Employees Time Off To Vote? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Minnesota | 68.8 | N | Y | before noon |
| 2 | Maine | 67.4 | N | N | N |
| 3 | Wisconsin | 66.1 | N | N | max 3 hrs |
| 4 | Alaska | 64.4 | N | Y | as needed |
| 5 | Vermont | 63.7 | N | N | N |
| 6 | New Hampshire | 62.3 | N | N | N |
| 7 | Montana | 61.5 | Y | Y | N |
| 8 | Iowa | 60.7 | N | max 3 hrs | max 3 hrs |
| 9 | Oregon | 60.5 | N | reasonable amount | reasonable amount |
| 10 | North Dakota | 60.4 | N | Y | employers encouraged |
| 11 | Wyoming | 59.7 | N | max 1 hr | max 1 hr |
| 12 | Connecticut | 58.3 | N | N | N |
| 13 | South Dakota | 58.2 | N | max 2 hrs | max 2 hrs |
| 14 | Missouri | 57.5 | N | N | max 3 hrs |
| 15 | Michigan | 57.4 | N | N | N |
| 16 | Washington | 56.9 | N | N | N |
| 17 | Colorado | 56.8 | N | max 2 hrs | max 2 hrs |
| tie | Massachusetts | 56.8 | N | N | N |
| 19 | Delaware | 56.3 | Y | N | max 2 hrs |
| tie | Nebraska | 56.3 | Y | Y | N |
| 21 | Ohio | 55.7 | Y | N | N |
| 22 | Louisiana | 54.2 | Y | Y | N |
| tie | Rhode Island | 54.2 | N | Y | N |
| 24 | Kansas | 54.0 | N | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 25 | Idaho | 53.7 | N | N | N |
| tie | Pennsylvania | 53.7 | N | N | N |
| 27 | Illinois | 52.8 | N | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 28 | Utah | 52.7 | N | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 29 | Virginia | 52.0 | N | N | N |
| 30 | Kentucky | 51.7 | N | max 4 hrs | max 4 hrs |
| 31 | Maryland | 51.4 | Y | Y | max 2 hrs |
| | ***National Average*** | ***51.0*** | | | |

## Table 7, *continued*

| Rank | State | % VAP Voted 2000 | Election Day Holiday?[1] | Give State Employees Time Off To Vote? | Give Private Employees Time Off To Vote? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32 | New Jersey | 51.0 | N | Y | N |
| 33 | Florida | 50.6 | N | Y | N |
| **34** | **North Carolina** | **50.2** | **N** | **N** | **N** |
| 35 | Alabama | 50.0 | N | N | N |
| 36 | New York | 49.3 | Y | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 37 | Tennessee | 49.2 | N | max 3 hrs | max 3 hrs |
| 38 | Indiana | 49.1 | Y | Y | N |
| 39 | Oklahoma | 48.8 | N | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 40 | Mississippi | 48.6 | N | N | N |
| 41 | Arkansas | 47.8 | N | Y | max 3 hrs |
| 42 | New Mexico | 47.4 | N | Y | max 2 hrs |
| 43 | South Carolina | 46.5 | Y | Y | N |
| 44 | West Virginia | 45.7 | Y | Y | max 3 hrs |
| 45 | California | 44.0 | N | max 2 hrs | max 2 hrs |
| 46 | Georgia | 43.8 | N | N | max 2 hrs |
| tie | Nevada | 43.8 | N | max 3 hrs | max 3 hrs |
| 48 | Texas | 43.1 | Y | max 2 hrs | max 2 hrs |
| 49 | Arizona | 42.1 | N | N | N |
| 50 | Hawaii | 41.0 | Y | Y | max 2 hrs |
| | Total Number of States | | 11 | 31 | 27 |

[1] No state has a holiday that requires public and private employers to grant a full paid day off, and observation requirements for state and private employers vary. For example, Texas allows a state or private employee two hours to cast a ballot and return to work, though election day is a state holiday.

*Source*: Federal Election Commission

That would help with two problems—the need for precinct workers and conflicts between the operation of polling places and the operation of public schools where many polling places are located. "There are space, parking, and safety issues," says Bartlett of the many North Carolina schools that double as polling places.

Another possibility might be weekend voting—an option the state has tried before. The 1964 gubernatorial primary and runoff primary, for example, were held on weekends. Weekend voting may conflict with travel plans or other leisure activities, and moving the federal voting day to the weekend would require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.[51] Still, Rep. Martha Alexander (D-Mecklenburg) believes it might be time to experiment with weekend voting once again. "Sunday voting? Maybe not, because this is the Bible Belt," says Alexander, "but what about Saturdays?"

## Absentee Voting

A significant number of votes in each election are cast by absentee voters, so access to this voting option can directly affect a state's participation rate. North Carolina's absentee voting system is not markedly different from other systems across the country, nor is it particularly burdensome. The 2001 General Assembly amended the law to remove a requirement that voters provide an excuse if they wished to vote absentee by mail.[52] The law previously had allowed absentee voting by mail for any of five reasons: 1) being sick or disabled and unable to enter a voting place; 2) expecting to be away from one's home county during the voting hours; 3) observing a religious holiday; 4) being incarcerated but not a convicted felon; or 5) being a voting precinct employee or officer.

In many ways, the absentee system is very accommodating. The absentee ballot application form is not onerous, and, if the voter is already registered to vote non-absentee, the form can be filed as late as the Tuesday before the election. It is one page and requires minimal information. The absentee ballot must *arrive* at the local board of elections by the day before elections—a postmark is not good enough. North Carolina also offers absentee one-stop voting, which does not require a mailed-in ballot, but allows the voter to cast a vote at the county board of elections or a designated county polling site any time between four and 25 days before the election.

One-stop voting is also no-excuse, which means a voter does not have to give a reason for voting early. According to the N.C. State Board of Elections, approximately 393,000 North Carolina voters (13.5 percent of all voters) used the one-stop option in the November 2000 elections, the first time it was available. While it is not possible to say how many of these were voters who would not have otherwise cast a ballot on Election Day, such high numbers suggest that the program's popularity might have increased the total number of voters. The numbers decreased in the 2002 non-presidential general election, with 7.1 percent of North Carolinians who went to the polls voting no-excuse, one-stop and the total rising to 9.1 percent when all mail-in ballots were included.

As is often the case when changes are made in the elections process, adoption of one-stop voting was viewed through a partisan lens. Republicans demonstrated on the floor of the House when the bill was put in, saying it was a partisan attempt to help Democrats. However, there is evidence that Republicans have not been harmed, with GOP voters using one-stop at least as frequently as Democrats as a percentage of their registration. Analysts for North Carolina Public Television's "Legislative Week in Review" said in the program's Sept. 20, 2002, broadcast that more Republican votes were cast in the Sept. 10, 2002, primary election than Democratic votes. Rep. Joe Kiser (R-Lincoln) is among those who see one-stop voting as a net gain for Republicans. "We fought it, and it turned out to be a bonanza for us," says Kiser.

State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary Bartlett agrees that a higher percentage of Republicans than Democrats used early voting in the 2002 general election. In 2000, Bartlett says the numbers were about in line with Democratic and Republican registration in the state. But in the 2002 general election, Republicans edged ahead, with 3.8 percent of all registered Republicans going to the polls early compared to 3.6 percent of all registered Democrats. "They really worked it," says Bartlett.

The North Carolina absentee process seems to work well. Overall, the system is accessible and easy to use and the addition of one-stop absentee voting provides a popular option that may increase turnout. Other changes to this system that may increase voter turnout are not specific to the absentee process; they include extending the registration window and closing the required time (25 days) between registration and voting. Again, there is broad disagreement over whether this would be a good idea, though it doesn't necessarily divide along partisan lines. "The more convenience we offer people, the more we're working our elections people to death," says Kiser. "They've got to prepare for the election *and* run the early voting. It's real time-consuming for them. It's a wonderful thing, but we're going to have to provide some money for this somewhere down the line."

Nonetheless, Bartlett sees increased convenience as the wave of the future in the conduct of elections—and a key to increased voter turnout. "I think in time these early additional voting sites will take the place of the [conventional] polling place and stay open through the election. People will go to a big voting center or do a mail ballot or eventually will have the opportunity to vote by Internet." Already, he says, overseas military personnel are taking advantage of the opportunity to vote using a combination of fax and email correspondence as opposed to traditional mail-in ballots. Bartlett sees such convenience voting as taking over an increasingly large share of the electorate until it takes over altogether.

# Ensuring Accuracy of the Count in North Carolina Elections

The accuracy of election processes is safeguarded in two ways. One involves human oversight of the voting process. The elections administrators who are closest to the voting process have the greatest degree of direct contact with voting equipment and the voting public and actually count the ballots after they are cast. Assuring that they are competent helps to ensure an accurate count. The other way to promote accuracy is by using up-to-date voting equipment. The various types of equipment operate in different manners, have different inherent error rates, and require different means of casting ballots. Some types of equipment are considered to be more user-friendly than others. These dissimilarities result in the inevitable fact that some methods of voting will produce more accurate tabulation of results than others. "Each type of voting equipment has its pluses and minuses," says Bartlett. And, each of these essential components of the voting process—elections administrators and voting equipment—raise concerns when evaluating the accuracy of elections, requiring that each be evaluated independently.

## Elections Administrators and Their Levels of Oversight

Like all states, North Carolina has two layers of oversight of election administration. These are the state and county level.

### *North Carolina State Board of Elections*

The State Board of Elections is the highest level of election oversight in North Carolina. This body is composed of five members appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms. Appointees are chosen from nominations submitted by the state party chairman for each of the two major political parties, with no more than three members from the same political party. The party of the sitting governor holds the majority of the seats. The State Board of Elections appoints an executive director of elections who carries out administrative duties established by Board members. This individual serves a four-year term. Gary Bartlett, the current director, was appointed in August 1993, and his current term expires May 15, 2005.

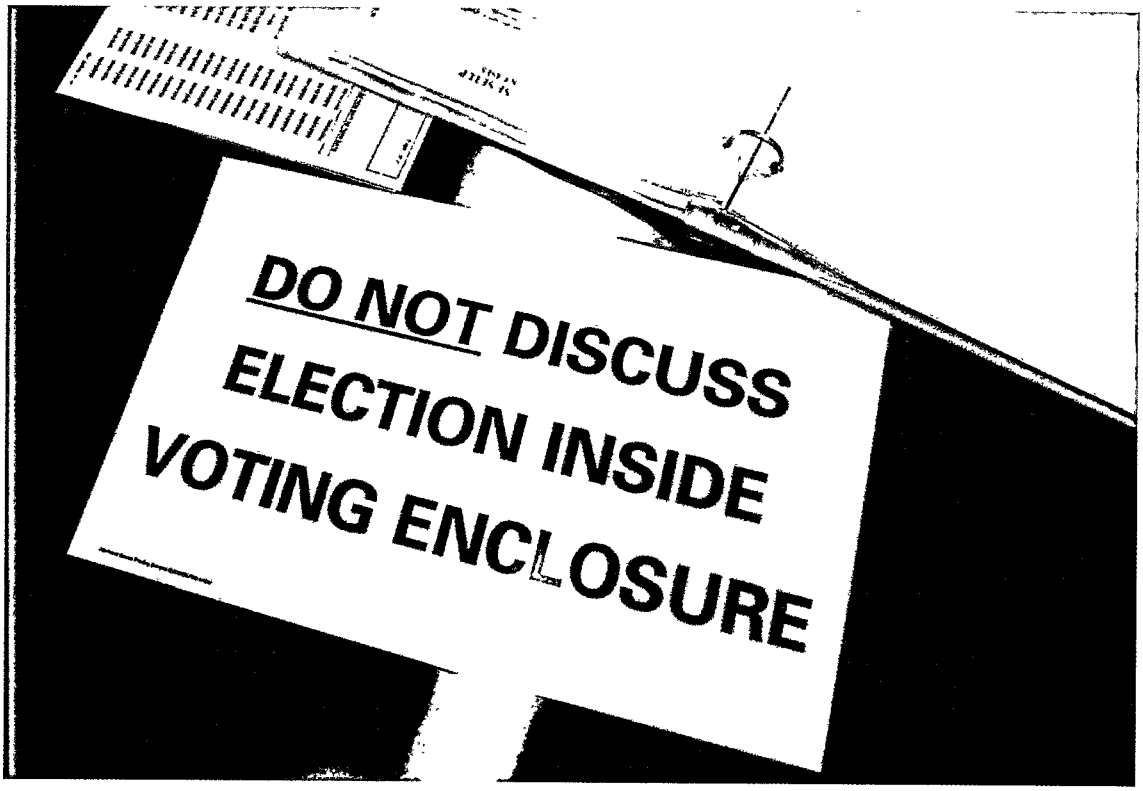
### *County Boards of Elections*

Individual county boards of elections represent the next level of oversight. Each of the state's 100 counties has a three-member county board of elections. The political parties nominate and the State Board of Elections appoints these members to two-year terms, with no more than two members of the same political party. Additionally, the state executive director appoints a director of elections for each county after receiving a recommended candidate from the county board of elections.

### *Precinct Election Judges*

Each county board of elections appoints one chief judge and two assistant judges for every precinct in the county. With 2,810 precincts statewide, this means nearly 10,000 precinct officials are at work on a typical election day. The chairs of the two main political parties in each county can recommend qualified individuals to fill these positions. However, no more than one judge in each precinct can belong to the same political party as the chief judge. These precinct officials serve two-year terms and have the highest level of direct contact with voters, voting equipment, and the actual ballots. In short, these officials run the precincts, from matching voters to their names on registration lists, to keeping order, to actually counting ballots.

Local boards of elections and precinct officials must learn the ins-and-outs of election procedure and administration while serving a brief two-year term. At times, it may seem that election officials are just getting on their feet when their terms expire. Accordingly, some have argued that these local officials should receive four-year terms. While Bartlett doesn't object to this idea, he also notes, "It's not our biggest problem. They are usually reappointed—unless it's an issue of competency. The biggest problem we have is age. We've got to have a better cross section." Retirees are the greatest source of campaign workers, says Bartlett, and while retirees make a good pool for drawing precinct workers, Bartlett says he does not believe all of the workers should come from that source. He says 60 to 65 percent of precinct officials stick with the task for a considerable period of time, so length of term is not an issue. "For the other 30–40 percent, it's constant change," Bartlett says.




*Karen Tam*

Strengthening training requirements of elections officials is another means of improving local administration of elections. The State Board of Elections could, for example, require completion of its Certification in Elections Program for all members of county boards of elections. As elections expert R. Doug Lewis puts it, "One clear lesson of Election 2000 is that states must have a stronger hand in oversight and training of local elected officials."[53] Bartlett, however, opposes such a change. "We'd lose half the board members." Instead, the state board is considering offering a program of "training the trainer" in which an instructional program would be provided for community college instructors, who in turn would provide training to local elections officials. Currently, the State Board of Elections trains the county boards, who train the precinct officials.

Human interaction with the voting process naturally introduces the potential for error, and it is unlikely that solutions will ever be developed to completely eliminate this source of inaccuracy. As one researcher of election equipment put it, "Talking with election officials, one discovers that one of the issues that they grapple with is the inability of many people to follow simple directions."[54] State law restricts the degree of assistance voters can request when casting their ballots.[55] Indeed, federal and state laws carry criminal penalties for officials who coerce voters during the voting process, so they are naturally hesitant about offering assistance.

## Voting Irregularities and Fraud

Voting irregularities and fraud are significant concerns when evaluating the role of voters and election officials in the voting process. While election fraud involves criminal activity, voting irregularities can result from negligence or incompetence on the part of a voter or election administrator. Nationally, there have been significant incidents of both phenomena in recent years, with the outcomes of elections contested in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania.[56]

Several recent North Carolina elections have involved accusations of fraud. In 1994, Robert C. Anderson, a Republican who lost his bid for the state's 7th Congressional District, raised accusations of fraud against his opponent, Democratic U.S. Representative Charlie Rose. District Attorney Johnson Britt determined that local officials did make "some human errors, or clerical mistakes," but cleared Rose and officials in the Robeson County Board of Elections of any criminal charges.[57] Anderson ultimately presented his alle-

gations to a congressional task force investigating voter fraud. The committee ultimately determined that Rose had legitimately won the election, but the allegations did raise concerns about the vulnerability of the state's voting process.[58] Bartlett notes that in the Rose investigation, no evidence was uncovered of a single illegal vote.

However, state audits of the 1998 elections in Duplin County revealed numerous irregularities in the voting records. One record indicated that a 75-year-old woman voted twice. The Duplin County Board of Elections initially declined the state's recommendation to investigate the inconsistencies.[59] Further investigation by the State Board revealed that the county board of elections office changed people's voting records without their authorization.[60]

Continued state investigations caused all three members of the Duplin County Board of Elections to resign.[61] Ultimately, no criminal charges were filed as District Attorney Dewey Hudson determined that "the investigation did not reveal any credible evidence of any conspiracy to fraudulently or corruptly affect the election process in Duplin County. . . . What the investigation did reveal was many instances of gross incompetence." It was determined that the county suffered from severe mismanagement and years of failure to comply with state and federal election law. Among the allegations were forged, discarded, and destroyed voter registration cards, fraudulent signatures on absentee ballots, and unauthorized persons gaining access to ballot boxes.[62] In this instance, the State Board of Elections asked for and received the resignations of the entire county board of elections and restructured the operations of the county's elections office. The county board has since performed well in administering elections.

Competence of elections officials may also have come into play in the State Board of Elections' ordering of new elections in two county commissioners' races in Robeson County following the Sept. 10, 2002, primary.[63] Among the irregularities were voting machines that were not programmed properly and did not work in 75 percent of Robeson County's polling places. Voters were given paper ballots and in some cases were handed the wrong ballot or were directed to the wrong precinct. In one instance, a precinct judge closed a voting place for two hours while she went to get ballots. The episode resulted in the firing of the county elections director and a much smoother operation during the November 2002 general election.

These recent investigations concluded that incompetence rather than criminal wrongdoing was the major source of voting irregularities. "There's been very little fraud," says Bartlett. "It's not wholesale. . . . North Carolina can be proud. I cannot think of any race where there has been a cloud of suspicion that the person who received the most votes didn't win, and we've had some close races." However, allegations of rampant vote buying were confirmed in the 2002 Caldwell County Sheriff's election. Dozens and perhaps as many as 300 votes are thought to have been purchased at prices ranging from $10–$25 in a scandal labeled "outrageous" by Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Donald Stephens of Wake County and "dishonest and unfair" by the State Board of Elections.[64] Democratic Sheriff Roger Hutchings was ousted by Republican Gary Clark by a 746-vote margin. Stephens ruled that the vote buying did not affect the outcome of the election, and the results were certified. Proper training of officials is crucial to ensuring that elections follow legally sound protocol and generate accurate results.

## Current Training Requirements

As duties and responsibilities vary at each level of election oversight, differences exist in the extent and content of training for each level.

### *County Board Members and Election Directors*

The State Board of Elections created a Certification in Elections program in 1995, but this program is voluntary for most election officials. County directors of elections hired after May 1995 *must* complete this training process. Other county board of elections members and their staff have the option of becoming certified. Every member of a county board must attend two basic, less intensive training sessions offered by the State Board during their first two years of service (one session must be completed during the first six months after initial appointment).

### *Precinct Election Judges*

The state mandates training of all precinct election judges prior to each primary and general election, but the specific details are largely left to the discretion of individual county boards. Unless the county board chairman excuses them, all election judges must attend training sessions developed by their county. The current role of the State Board of Elections is to "train the trainers," according to Bartlett.

N.C. Division of Archives and History

***Paper ballots have been in use in North Carolina precincts since the early days of voting. They are still used in two rural counties.***

Resources provided by the state include seven training videos and precinct training manuals that are broadly used and customized to meet local training requirements. By statute, judges are compensated for attending these training sessions.[65] The state board recommends that each county develop training manuals and consider testing to evaluate the abilities of precinct officials. Testing is suggested with the caveat that "this may work well in your county—you know your precinct officials."[66]

Surveys are conducted every two years to assess training efforts in each individual county. However, two counties using the same election equipment could be operating with very different methods for training their election judges. There is no guarantee that equipment is tested, and voter intent is evaluated following the same guidelines in all counties. This lack of consistency introduces many potential sources of error.

In its *1999–2000 Elections Executive Report*, the State Board of Elections acknowledged that "precinct officials continue to be the weak link in the elections process."[67] As voting system technology progresses and election laws are amended, this concern becomes increasingly significant. Individuals working closest to the voting process must be aware of current legal standards and must be properly trained to maintain and operate new equipment. In the past 10 years, the number of North Carolina counties using direct recording electronic technology (DREs) has increased from 8 to 33. New equipment technology creates a potential problem, as voters may have difficulty using the equipment. Many individuals "are unaccustomed

to using an automated teller machine or similar electronic devices with key pads or touch screens, and as a result DREs might produce more undervoting," according to the Caltech/MIT Voting Project, which assessed the accuracy of various voting technologies following the 2000 presidential election.[68] Properly trained officials will be better prepared to aid voters in casting their ballots without overstepping procedural restrictions on voter assistance.

## Voting Equipment

A second concern directly affecting accuracy involves the voting equipment which individuals use to cast their votes. The voting precincts across North Carolina use a patchwork of systems, ranging from complex electronic technology to simple paper and pencil. Indeed, North Carolinians cast their ballots on Election Day using five types of equipment (see Table 8, p. 45).

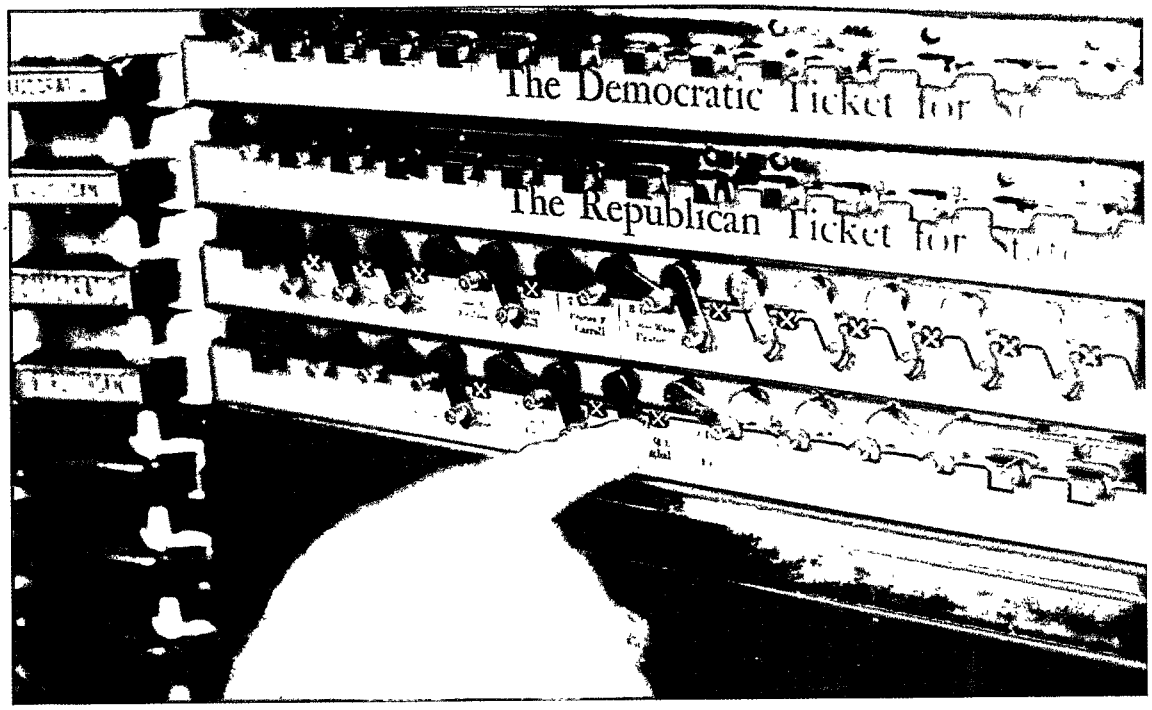
### *(1) Paper Ballots*

Used by two of North Carolina's most rural counties—Hyde and Tyrrell—the paper ballot is the most elementary and least expensive of all voting systems. Candidates' names and other ballot questions are printed on a piece of paper; voters cast their votes by checking or circling those names directly on the paper. Election officials count ballots by hand. Paper balloting also is used in many counties for absentee voting. State Board of Elections officials say paper ballots present two negatives: more opportunity for human error and a longer wait for the results. But they also represent the cheapest of election technology. Thus, it's no surprise that the two counties still counting ballots by hand are among the poorest and least populated in the state.

### *(2) Mechanical Lever Machines*

Used by four counties in North Carolina (Chowan, Hoke, Scotland, and Swain)—or less than 2 percent of the state's voters, mechanical lever machines allow voters to cast their votes by adjusting a series of levers corresponding to candidates' names or other ballot questions. To lock in their vote, voters pull a large lever which activates a series of gears on a number counter. If all 27,000 parts of the voting machine work properly, election officials simply read the counter to tally the vote for each individual candidate. Lever machines are no longer manufactured, forcing counties to be creative in replacing parts. Reports from around the state and nation tell of lever machines being held together by Q-Tips, toothpicks, and garbage bag twist ties. Such measures make the machines vulnerable to tampering and other fraudulent activity.

***Mechanical lever machines are no longer manufactured, but some are still in use.***




*N.C. Division of Archives and History*

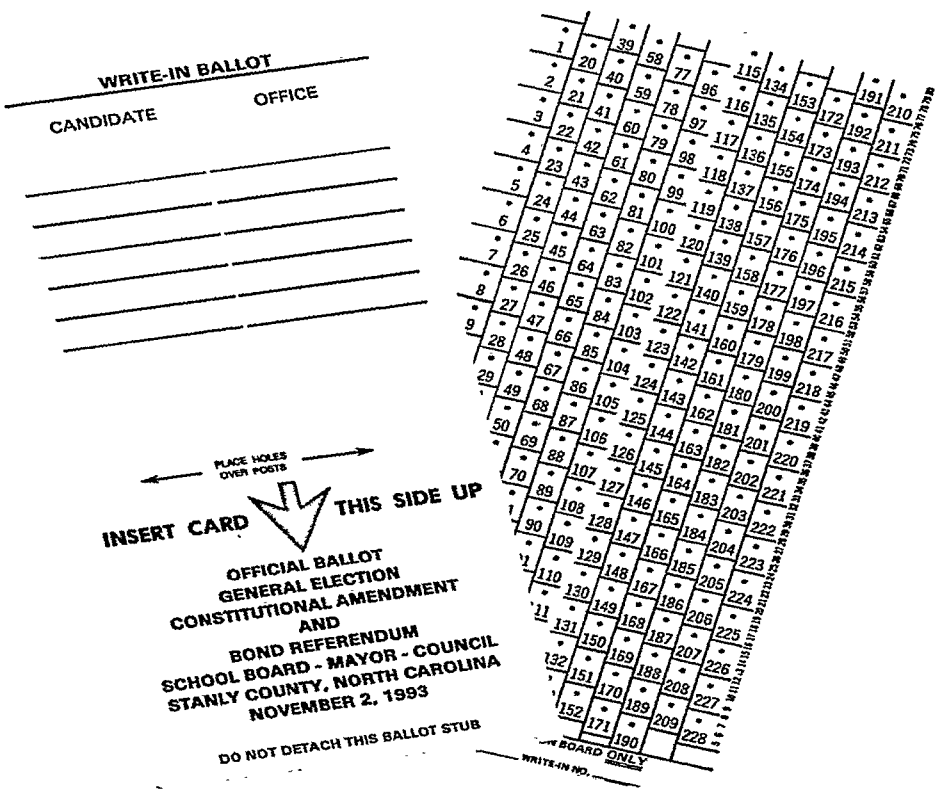
### *(3) Punch Cards*

Used by eight counties in North Carolina (Cabarrus, Duplin, Forsyth, McDowell, Mitchell, Onslow, Vance, and Watauga)—or 9 percent of the state's voters,[69] punch cards come in two varieties: the "Datavote" and the "Votomatic." The latter is the more popular of the two and is the variety used by the majority of Florida counties involved in the presidential election dispute of 2000. The Votomatic requires voters to place a punch card behind a voting booklet. A series of punch holes lines the spine of the booklet. And because of its shape and pronounced spine, the booklet, when opened, looks much like a butterfly. Accordingly, the punch card is referred to as the "butterfly ballot." Using a stylus, voters punch the hole corresponding to their candidate's name. The stylus, if used properly, punches a small piece of paper (referred to as a "chad") out of the punch card. A computer tallies the votes by reading the holes produced by the absent chad. It was the presence of chads—hanging, swinging, pregnant, dimpled, and all other permutations—on thousands of punch card ballots that started Florida's 2000 presidential election dispute.

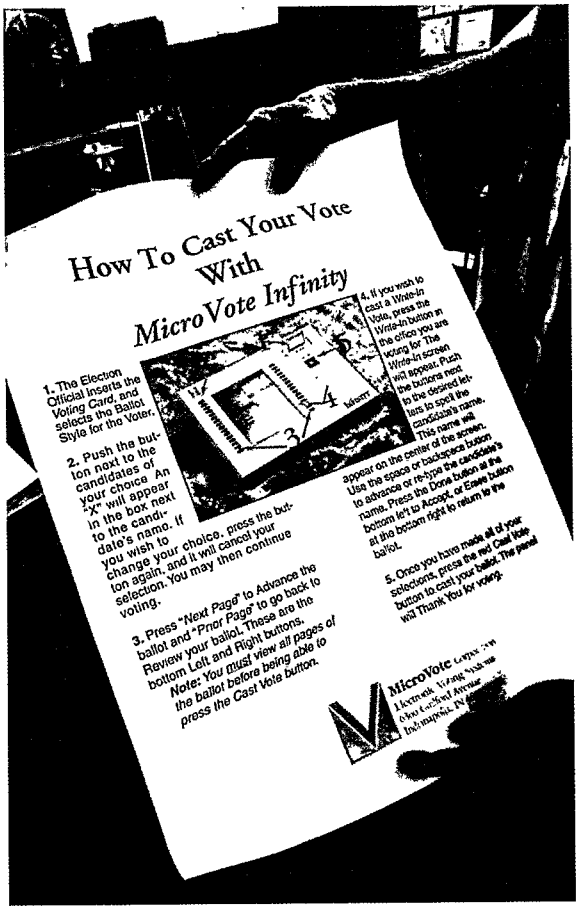
Most of the cost for the punch card system lies in the creation of the butterfly booklet, the ballot itself (the most expensive of all ballot types due to its unique construction), and the optical scanners needed to read the butterfly ballots.

### *(4) Direct Recording Electronic Devices (DREs)*

Used by 35 counties in North Carolina,[70] or roughly 40 percent of the state's registered voters, direct recording electronic devices (DREs) look like, and are electronically configured similarly to, banks' automated teller machines. Contained in a free-standing unit equipped with a computer monitor, keyboard, and touch-sensitive buttons or screens, DREs allow voters to cast their votes by pushing buttons which correspond to candidates' names or other ballot issues. The keyboard allows voters to write in a candidate's name. Votes are tallied and stored on a memory cartridge or diskette. To allow voters the federally mandated five




***Punch Cards are used by eight counties in North Carolina.***




Karen Tam

minutes at each unit to vote, there must be one DRE unit per 300 registered voters in each precinct, according to State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett. That means most counties must purchase multiple units in each precinct.

### *(5) Optical Scanners Using Marksense Technology*

Used by 51 counties in North Carolina, or 48 percent of the state's registered voters, optical scanners using Marksense technology require voters to darken with a pencil or pen an oval or arrow beside a candidate's name. Votes are tallied by manually feeding the ballots into an optical scanner, which uses a series of lasers to recognize and count darkened ovals or arrows. Generally, precincts need only one optical scanner to read all ballots cast at the polling place. Several of the state's more urban counties (Durham, New Hanover, and Wake) use Marksense technology, as do many counties with smaller numbers of registered voters (Camden, Graham, and Jones, for example). Marksense technology also is used widely in standardized testing such as the SATs and in lotteries in Virginia and South Carolina.

***Modern voting equipment: (left) direct recording electronic device and (below) optical scan ballot***


Karen Tam

## Costs of Electronic Technologies

In the wake of the Florida election debacle, there has been a monumental effort on a nationwide scale to update the country's ailing and aged voting equipment. The two technologies at the top of most revision lists are DREs and Marksense. But in a time of budget crises in 45 states and downsizing and spending restraints, the cost of these technologies brings to a halt many legislative debates concerning electronic election systems.

In North Carolina, the counties—not the state—are responsible for purchasing voting equipment. One implication of this arrangement is that less-wealthy counties face greater financial obstacles to changing their voting systems. Taking this a step further, *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry observes that the cheapest, "most error-prone machines tend to be in the poorest counties."[71]

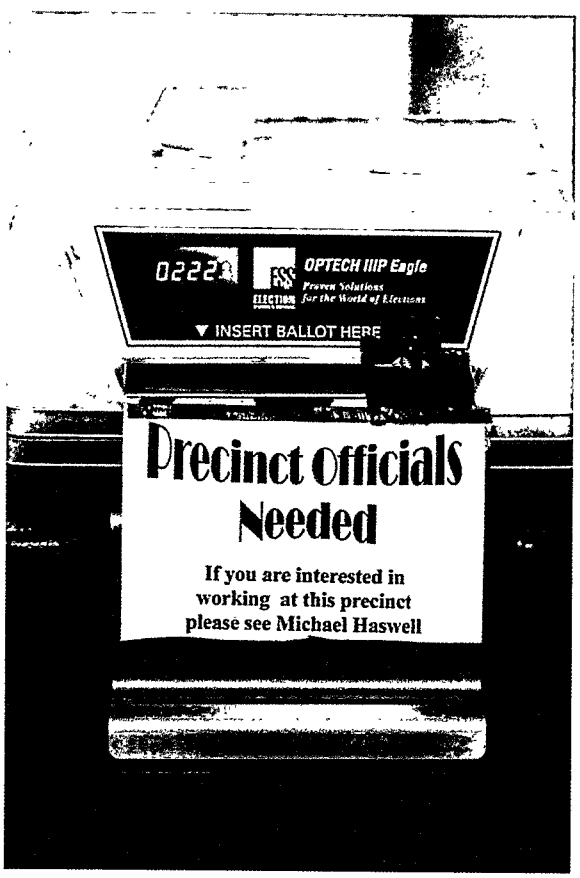
An Illinois study confirmed Raspberry's supposition, finding that the poorest, least educated segments of the state's population were most likely to live in precincts with the most error-prone system of counting votes—the punch card system.[72] The study placed the estimated increase in miscounted ballots at 2 percent in presidential election compared to use of more reliable systems. As the authors put it, "That strikes us as too many votes to throw away because of voting problems in a wealthy, technologically advanced democracy." The authors recommended statewide, or even national adoption of more reliable voting equipment, rather than relying on individual counties to foot the bill for whatever system they could afford.

However, in the post-Florida rush to replace faulty, cheap equipment with all things electronic, state legislators and county officials in North Carolina also have found cost to be an issue. Watauga County, for example, still relies on the punch card machine and will continue to do so for a least another year. The reason? Money. County elections supervisor Jane Ann Hodges says it would cost the county some $500,000 to purchase such a system. County commissioners are waiting to see if the federal government will pitch in to help with the cost, but that kind of help is not on the horizon.

Nonetheless, Bartlett says the State Board of Elections considers voting machines in 18 counties—including Watauga, to be facing immediate risk of failure and in need of replacement. These counties include six of the 51 optical scan counties using outmoded technology (Camden, Currituck, Granville, Jones, Lee, and New Hanover), all of the eight counties on the punch card system (Cabarrus, Duplin, Forsyth, McDowell, Mitchell, Onslow, Vance, and Watauga), and the four counties using lever-operated machines (Chowan, Hoke, Scotland, and Swain).

DREs and Optical Scan/Marksense are the two most expensive voting systems today, due in no small part to their novelty and the electronic devices used in each. While there are a variety of equipment manufacturers around the country, and thus price competition, the average base price of a DRE unit ranges from $3,000 to $5,000, excluding equipment testing and any required system training. Because the DRE is a voting system that does not use a paper ballot, counties save the costs they otherwise would incur in producing and printing election ballots. Bartlett estimates that outfitting all counties currently not using DRE technology with the systems would cost in excess of $80 million.

Bartlett believes the state could save a lot of money by choosing a uniform system of voting. "Piecemealing it would cost $80 to $100 million," says Bartlett. "If we went uniform throughout—from top to bottom, we could save $20 to $30 million." That's based on the Georgia experience in

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## Table 8. Voting Equipment Used in 2000 Elections in North Carolina by County

| Optical Scanner (51)[1] 48% | Direct Recording Electronic Devices or DREs (35) 40% | Punch Card (8) 9% | Mechanical Lever Device (4) <2% | Paper Ballot (2) 0.3% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alexander | Alamance | Cabarrus | Chowan | Hyde |
| Anson | Alleghany | Duplin | Hoke | Tyrrell |
| Ashe | Bertie | Forsyth | Scotland | |
| Avery | Bladen | McDowell | Swain | |
| Beaufort | Brunswick | Mitchell | | |
| Caldwell | Buncombe | Onslow | | |
| Camden | Burke | Vance | | |
| Catawba | Carteret | Watauga | | |
| Chatham | Caswell | | | |
| Clay | Cherokee | | | |
| Cleveland | Craven | | | |
| Columbus | Davidson | | | |
| Cumberland | Davie | | | |
| Currituck | Gaston | | | |
| Dare | Greene | | | |
| Durham | Guilford | | | |
| Edgecombe | Henderson | | | |
| Franklin | Jackson | | | |
| Gates | Lenoir | | | |
| Graham | Macon | | | |
| Granville | Madison | | | |
| Halifax | Mecklenburg | | | |
| Harnett | Moore | | | |
| Haywood | Pamlico | | | |
| Hertford | Pasquotank | | | |
| Iredell | Pender | | | |
| Johnston | Perquimans | | | |
| Jones | Pitt | | | |
| Lee | Polk | | | |
| Lincoln | Rutherford | | | |
| Martin | Stanly | | | |
| Montgomery | Surry | | | |
| Nash | Transylvania | | | |
| New Hanover | Union | | | |
| Northampton | Wilson | | | |
| Orange | | | | |
| Person | | | | |
| Randolph | | | | |
| Richmond | | | | |
| Robeson | | | | |
| Rockingham | | | | |
| Rowan | | | | |
| Sampson | | | | |
| Stokes | | | | |
| Wake | | | | |
| Warren | | | | |
| Washington | | | | |
| Wayne | | | | |
| Wilkes | | | | |
| Yadkin | | | | |
| Yancey | | | | |

[1] *Key:*

Number of counties using the specified voting system in parentheses.

Percent of total registered voters (statewide) using the system listed below the system name. Percents do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

*Source:* State Board of Elections.

## Table 9. Average Residual Votes* by Machine Type in U.S. Counties, 1988–2000 Presidential Elections

| Type of Machine | Average Percent Residual Vote by County |
|---|---|
| Optical Scan | 2.1% |
| Direct Record Electronic (DRE) | 2.9 |
| Punch Card Machines | 2.9–3.0 |
| Lever Operated Machines | 1.9 |
| Paper Ballots | 1.9 |

*Source:* "Residual Votes Attributable to Technology," CALTECH/MIT Voter Technology Project, March 30, 2001, p. 10. On the Internet at *http://www.hss.caltech.edu/%7Evoting/CalTech_MIT_Report_Version2.pdf*

* Residual votes are votes that cannot be counted due to over-voting or under-voting. **Under-voting** can be an intentional act on the part of a voter who does not wish to cast a ballot in a particular race. **Over-voting** is always a mistake.

which a state similar in population to North Carolina's outfitted all of its precincts with direct record electronic voting equipment in 2002 for $52.3 million. While Bartlett believes the state purchased too few machines for the size of its electorate, he was impressed with the cost savings Georgia was able to realize by equipping the entire state through a single vendor. Maryland and Oklahoma have taken the same approach, says Bartlett.

The Optical Scan/Marksense technology system starts at a price of $5,200 per unit, with the laser optical scanners used to read each ballot accounting for most of the cost, says Bartlett. Not included is the production and printing of the ballot needed to use Marksense. State statutes require that each county print one ballot for every registered voter on the county voting rolls. While each precinct needs only one optical scanner, a county may have between 20 and 200 precincts. With several back-up machines, a county with only 25 precincts may have to purchase 30 scanners at a base cost as high as $160,000. Such a cost could be a significant burden on counties with limited budgets.

### Margins of Error

In response to the Florida recount affair, the Carnegie Corporation commissioned faculty at the California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to devise the "ultimate voting machine." This group, called The Voting Project, seeks to create a machine that is user-friendly, accurate, and secure and one that utilizes current DRE technology. But before such a device could be designed, a fundamental question had to be posed: "Is such a dream electronic device more accurate than current technology?"

Preliminary reports based on the accuracy of current DRE technology say "yes." The Voting Project examined the presidential residual votes—or ballots that cannot be counted due to over-voting or under-voting—for all U.S. counties in elections since 1988. The study's preliminary findings are that, of the new technologies, optical scanners produced the lowest rate of residual votes—2.1 percent compared to 2.9 percent for DREs nationwide (see Table 9). A range of 2.9–3.0 percent of all votes cast on punch cards, the most advanced technology other than scanners and DREs, could not be counted because of residual voting.

By comparison, in the 2000 election, N.C. State Board of Elections data indicate Durham County's optical scanning system produced just 1.5 percent to 2 percent uncounted ballots. And, State Board of Elections officials do not believe that optical scan/Marksense technology produces a more reliable vote count than DREs. "Optical scan is not more accurate," says Michelle Mrozkowski, former SBE information director. Mrozkowski says "problems with ink, paper thickness, and moisture cause problems with optical scan/Marksense." Statewide, according to North Carolina election officials, 3 percent of all votes cast could not be counted due to either over-voting or under-voting. **Undervotes** are ballots without votes cast in a particular race; **overvotes** are ballots with more votes cast in a particular race than are allowed. Undervoting can reflect the intent of a voter who does not wish to choose in a particular race, while overvoting is always a mistake. Some voting machines can be programmed to offer voters a second chance when they overvote.

The Voting Project report concludes that simply changing outdated, inaccurate voting equipment

for newer technologies "could lower the incidence of [residual voting] substantially," though the importance of training both the voter and the election official on how to use the latest equipment should not be underestimated.[73]

North Carolina election officials are somewhat skeptical of the Voting Project Report. They indicate that the credibility of the report was damaged by the intent of the study sponsors to create their own voting machine and the necessity of proving existing systems flawed to justify the creation of this new product. And, Bartlett notes that new voting technology is not a cure-all—a fact that was underscored when new voting equipment designed to address previous problems failed across Florida in September 2002 primary elections.[74] Closer to home in North Carolina, Robeson County officials found their optical scan vote tabulating equipment was not programmed properly and did not get it repaired in time for the election. County elections officials had to count ballots by hand.

Nonetheless, the margins of error and rate of residual votes for each voting system are critical in any election, especially one as close as the 2000 presidential election. An advantage of DREs is that they could be programmed to allow second-chance voting when a voter votes for too many or too few candidates for a given office.[75] Equipping counties with the most accurate technologies available and teaching voters how to use the systems should be a goal of the state's election officials, because, as Kimball Brace of the Election Data Systems emphatically states, "Nobody wants to be the next Palm Beach."[76]

### Voting System Standards and Testing

In 1990, the U.S. Congress charged the Federal Election Commission with devising national voting system standards. The call for standards came after Congress received pressure from a 1975 General Accounting Office report and a 1988 National Bureau of Standards project, both recommending closer regulation of computerized election equipment.

While voluntary, the guidelines laid down specific procedures to deal with both the accuracy and security of the nation's computerized voting

## *New Federal Law May Provide Additional Dollars for Voting Reforms*

Congress has passed a new law aimed at avoiding a repeat of the 2000 election debacle in Florida. Called the Help America Vote Act of 2002, the law authorizes up to $3.9 billion for such purposes as purchase of new voting equipment by the states, upgrading computer systems, and improving election administration.

The legislation creates a range of requirements for state voting systems used in federal elections. The systems must allow voters to: verify votes before a ballot is cast; make changes or corrections before casting a ballot; produce a permanent paper record of a vote with a manual audit capacity; be accessible to individuals with disabilities so that they have the same opportunity to participate as other voters; and provide access to voting in other languages where necessary.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost the state and local governments $1.7 to $3.5 billion dollars over the next five years to comply with the legislation. If the full authorization were appropriated, North Carolina would be in line to receive $88.3 million. The state is expected to receive some $31 million already appropriated by Congress for the current federal fiscal year.

Besides mandating changes in the voting process, the law requires states to implement a statewide database that contains registration information about every voter in the state. North Carolina has its State Election Information Management System (SEIMS), but the system will need to be upgraded to comply with the new law.

*—Mike McLaughlin*

*Source:* "Election Reform at a Price," *State Policy Reports*, Alexandria, Va., Vol. 20, Issue 20 (Fall 2002), pp. 5–9.

equipment. The standards establish "three levels of tests to be performed on voting systems (DREs, Marksense, and punch cards read by optical scanners) to ensure that the end product works accurately, reliably, and appropriately. These are:

- Qualification tests to be performed by independent testing authorities designated by the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED),
- Certification tests to be performed by the state, and
- Acceptance tests to be performed by the end user."[77]

To date, at least 22 states have adopted the FEC's voluntary voting standards, including North Carolina. Some states, however, are requiring that all voting machines be tested extensively three days prior to an election before an audience of election officials, the public, and the media. For example, South Carolina has established strict guidelines on how county equipment should be tested.[78]

Some states, too, are adopting standards to address the possibility of programmed machine fraud, a process by which the electronic equipment used in voting is coded improperly by election officials or manufacturers in order to "throw" an election. Many computer programmers are concerned about the rush to computerize voting procedures, a rush that is often unaccompanied by guidelines for independent verification of DRE software. "Any computer scientist will tell you that unintentional errors or even a Trojan horse could be hidden in thousands of lines of code. Without the ability to inspect the code, there is no way to verify the results of [elections]," says Eva Waskell of the Washington, D.C. chapter of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.[79]

North Carolina requires that all voting equipment be tested before any election.[80] Newly revised rules give the State Board of Elections power to disapprove voting systems currently used in a county or proposed for use. The rules also require testing of voting equipment.[81]

**Table 10. Participation in Presidential Elections, North Carolina, and 10 Top Voter Participation States in 2000 by Voting Age Population, 1988–2000**

| State | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | Average 1988–2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minnesota | 66.3 | 71.6 | 64.1 | 68.8 | 67.7 |
| Maine | 62.2 | 72.0 | 71.9 | 67.4 | 68.4 |
| Wisconsin | 62.0 | 69.0 | 57.4 | 66.1 | 63.6 |
| Alaska | 52.0 | 63.8 | 56.9 | 64.4 | 59.3 |
| Vermont | 59.1 | 67.5 | 58.1 | 63.7 | 62.1 |
| New Hampshire | 54.8 | 63.1 | 57.3 | 62.3 | 59.4 |
| Montana | 62.4 | 70.1 | 62.1 | 61.5 | 64.0 |
| Iowa | 59.3 | 65.3 | 57.7 | 60.7 | 60.75 |
| Oregon | 58.6 | 65.7 | 57.1 | 60.5 | 60.5 |
| North Dakota | 61.5 | 67.3 | 56.0 | 60.4 | 61.3 |
| *National Average* | 50.1 | 55.1 | 49.1 | 51.0 | 51.3 |
| **North Carolina** | 43.4 | 50.1 | 45.6 | 50.2 | 47.3 |

*Source:* Federal Election Commission.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

North Carolina's record in participating in elections is lackluster at best. While progress has been made in recent years, the state still ranks among the bottom third in voter turnout (34th) for presidential elections. This is no laurel upon which to rest. Yet the state has shown peculiar complacency when it comes to increasing voter participation —as though the right to vote were to be taken lightly—even placed on par with the right not to vote. But in reality, voting is both a right and a responsibility, whereas not voting is simply irresponsible. The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research believes the state must do everything in its power to encourage its citizens to exercise their civic responsibility and vote on election day.

The Center isn't the only group pressing for greater participation in the state's elections. Nonprofit organizations such as the North Carolina Center for Voter Education have sought to encourage both voter turnout and campaign finance reform. Kids Voting North Carolina provides children the opportunity to cast an unofficial ballot on election day, underscoring the importance of voting. Vote for America N.C. has initiated an intergenerational drive to encourage North Carolina citizens to pledge to vote. The League of Women Voters of North Carolina continually works the vineyards to encourage more people to register to vote, as does the NAACP. The national organization Youth Vote works hard on the state's college campuses to get students to exercise their franchise. Local precinct workers offer red, white, and blue "I Voted" stickers that voters can place on their lapels in hopes that others will go and do likewise.

Advocating for improvements in the state's conduct of elections, the Institute for Southern Studies gave North Carolina an overall grade of C on such issues as registration rate, registration deadline, voter turnout, and uncounted votes. Only one state in the South, Louisiana, received a B, and Mississippi got an F.[82] The North Carolina Progress Board, in its *North Carolina 2020* report, called on the state to improve its voter turnout to 85 percent of *registered* voters by the year 2020.[83] That's a huge jump from the 58.2 percent of North Carolina's *registered* voters who cast ballots in the 2000 presidential election or the 46.2 percent of *registered* voters who cast ballots in the 2002 general election. While the Center considers percentage of the *voting age population* that votes to be a better benchmark than percentage of registered voters, the sentiment is the same. More Tar Heels must go to the polls and make their voices heard in order to ensure a healthy democracy.

***North Carolina has made large strides in getting citizens registered and now exceeds the national average in percentage of eligible voters registered, but the act of registering is meaningless if the would-be voter never casts a ballot.***

It will take leadership and more resources from the state to make this happen. As Bartlett puts it, "For the most part, county boards of elections have been underfunded and undermanned. Everybody understands this, from the local level to the state level to the federal level, but when choices are made, we kind of go to the bottom." The Florida election debacle provided a window of opportunity for devoting more dollars to the elections process, says Bartlett, "but the economy tanked, and that opportunity went by the wayside." Nonetheless, the problems did not disappear with the economic downturn.

Improving the performance of North Carolina's election systems requires attention to three major components of the elections process: (1) voter registration, (2) voter participation, and (3) the counting of the votes. North Carolina *has* made large strides in getting citizens registered and now exceeds the national average in percentage of eligible voters registered, but the act of registering is meaningless if the would-be voter never casts a ballot. North Carolina *must* achieve better voter turnout. In addition, the state needs to address its antiquated equipment and fine-tune its training requirements to ensure an accurate count. Thus, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research focuses its recommendations for improving the state's election process on two broad areas: (1) voter participation, and (2) accuracy of the count.

## Recommendations To Increase Voter Participation

Although the state has made strides in getting its citizens registered to vote, there is still room for some improvement. And, once registered,

it appears that many Tar Heels need a further nudge to actually cast a ballot. As Curtis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate puts it, "The root of the turnout problem is motivational and not procedural."[84] Adjustments to the process of registering and voting will only carry North Carolina so far. The state needs improvement both in fine-tuning the process of registering and voting and in civic aptitude and civic engagement. Thus, the Center recommends that the state pursue the following strategies for encouraging increased voter registration and participation:

**1.** ***The State Board of Elections should (a) undertake and lead a voter registration education campaign to stimulate interest in registering and voting in North Carolina, including publishing a Voter's Information Guide to educate voters, and (b) the Board should adopt a goal of registering 90 percent of North Carolina's voting age population.*** The Center initially offered this recommendation in 1991, suggesting then that the campaign be housed either in the Secretary of State's office or in the State Board of Elections. The Center has since decided that the nonpartisan State Board of Elections would provide the best home for this operation, with a strong boost from the Governor's Office. As Gary Bartlett, director of the State Board of Elections, puts it, "What we lack top to bottom in North Carolina is any vehicle to provide voter education. It's a void that needs to be filled in this state." The campaign would be aimed at increasing awareness of the need to register, deadlines for registration, and the crucial connection between registering and actually casting a ballot. This second step is critical in North Carolina, which has long lagged the nation in terms of voter turnout—more likely to lurk in the bottom third than in the top 10 where the state belongs.

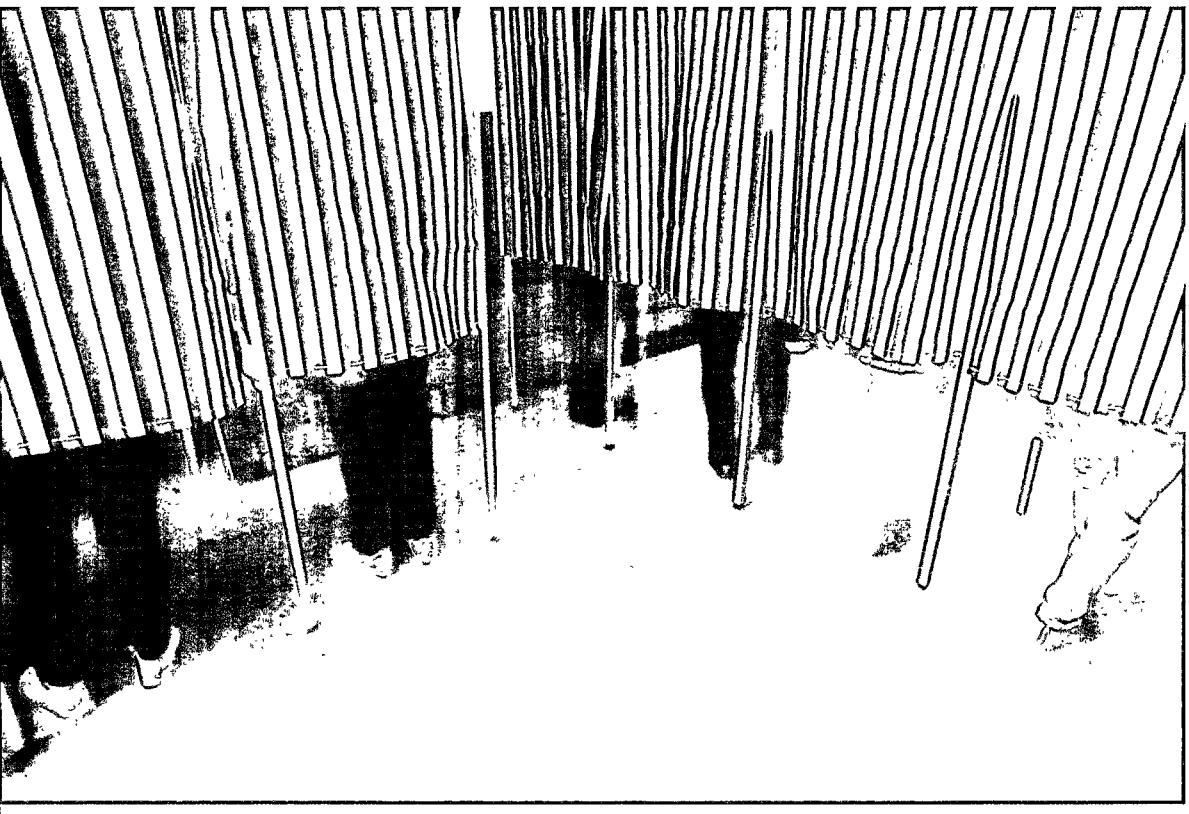
The campaign should focus on increasing voter awareness of the National Voter Registration Form and of all other avenues of voter registration. Since Motor Voter was instituted, the FEC has produced a universal voter registration form, available on its Internet website, that citizens can print out and mail to their state elections offices. North Carolina accepts the form, but this fact is not broadly publicized.

In addition, other avenues of voter registration should be emphasized in an awareness campaign, which should be coordinated through both local boards of elections and the statewide network of community colleges. The Governor's Office must be active in such a campaign, which should use a full array of publicity generating tools for encouraging voter participation, including public service announcements by the Agency for Public Telecommunications for the broadcast media, and pamphlets and other print materials created by the State Board of Elections for distribution to the public. North Carolina civic groups already engaged in encouraging people to register and vote must continue and even intensify those efforts. The public schools must consider how they can rejuvenate the civic spirit in young people, whether through curriculum reform or increased community experience through service learning.

It is also important to emphasize registration deadlines—that is, until the state takes the necessary step of allowing election day registration. Registering more voters should be a high priority as the first step toward actually casting a ballot. Many new registrants are going to need a nudge before they take the second step—voting. The campaign should link these two activities so that the percentage of voters more closely resembles the percentage of registered, would-be voters. At the time of the 2002 election, the percentage of the state's voting age population actually registered stood at 80.0 percent, while only 36.41 percent of the voting age population actually cast ballots—a gap of 43.6 percent.

To help close this yawning gap, each registered voter should receive a Voter's Information Guide that lists the candidates on the ballot and statements of their positions on the issues, as well as information about various options for voting. Such voter education pamphlets are used to good end in a number of states, including Alaska, California, Oregon, Washington, and some parts of Minnesota, New York, and Texas. State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary Bartlett says a voter education pamphlet providing nonpartisan information on candidates and issues could be prepared and mailed

***Number of countries that had voting rights for all adults, in 1900 ..... 0***
***Number that have full voting rights for all their adults now ..... 190***
—UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2000*



Karen Tam

to every voter household in North Carolina for approximately $1.5 million. That would be money well spent.

Registration is the obvious first step toward voting, and having a high percentage of registered voters will help elections officials avoid confusion when the state moves to election day registration. North Carolina already has made a good start toward a goal recommended by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research in 1991 of having 90 percent of the voting age population registered to vote. The state's registration numbers reached 81 percent of the voting age population in 2000 and now stand at about 80 percent.

**2.** ***The State Board of Elections and the N.C. General Assembly should take steps to close the gap between the close of registration and election day—with the ultimate goal of adopting election-day voter registration by 2006.*** The evidence suggests that election-day registration holds great potential to increase voter turnout. It allows would-be voters who become interested in elections late—when excitement about political campaigns is at its height, to register and cast a ballot. With the advent of the State Election Information Management System (SEIMS), the state has the data network in place ultimately to allow election-day registration. State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett notes that with adequate resources, election-day registration can be a reality for North Carolina. "Give me a little time, give me a little more money and people to provide the necessary infrastructure, and election day registration can work," says Bartlett. To assure eligibility and to prevent fraud, the state may need to require a showing of an address on a driver's license or other strong proof of residence, but election-day registration should be implemented in North Carolina. It's no accident that most of the highest turnout states allow registration on or near election day. Indeed, five of the top 10 states in terms of voter turnout for the 2000 presidential election allow election-day registration in some form. If North Carolina hopes to join these states, the state must shorten the time between close of registration and election day and adopt election-day registration by 2006. Bartlett should prepare a plan for implementing election-day registration with a firm estimate of cost, and the General Assembly should provide the necessary appropriation of funds.

**3.** ***The State Board of Elections and county election officials should set a goal of surpassing the national average for voter participation in the 2006 election and ranking among the top 10***

***states in voter turnout by voting age population by 2008, with at least 65 percent of the state's voting age population casting ballots.*** If North Carolina can aspire to have the nation's best public schools, universities, and even collegiate basketball teams, why not shoot for the top 10 in terms of voter participation? For too long, the state's governors, State Board of Elections, and its executive directors have been satisfied with lingering below the national average in terms of voter turnout. North Carolina can and must do better. The North Carolina Progress Board has called on the state to improve voter turnout to 85 percent of *registered* voters by the year 2020. While this represents a huge leap forward, it is an attainable goal if everyone works together to accomplish it. State and local governments, led by Governor Mike Easley, state elections director Gary Bartlett, the State Board of Elections itself, and local elections officers, should use every means at their disposal to engage citizens in the elections process and encourage them to vote. The national average should be the initial measure of accountability, but in the end, average isn't good enough. North Carolina should shoot for the top 10.

**4.** ***The North Carolina General Assembly should require the State Board of Elections to prepare a public report for each election showing statistics on voter turnout as a percentage of both registered voters and of the voting age population.*** The greatest long-term problem with the elections process in North Carolina is voter turnout on election day. Somehow, the state must eliminate the disconnect between registering to vote and actually casting a ballot and strengthen its effort to get citizens to the polls on election day. The State Board of Elections currently reports voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters. This results in a higher figure for percentage voting and obscures the fact that many people of voting-age population are not registered. And, it highlights the wrong goal. The correct goal is to have informed citizens and to have everyone of voting age cast a ballot. In the 2002 election, 46 percent of North Carolina's *registered* voters voted, but only 36.4 percent of the state's *voting age population* actually voted. The latest election for which comparative statistics are available shows North Carolina ranks 34th in the nation in voter turnout. North Carolina can and must do better. Highlighting the percentage of voting age


*Karen Tam*

population who casts a ballot will provide a clearer picture of how North Carolina really stands regarding voter turnout. Every other year, the State Board of Elections should issue a report on voter turnout that includes statistics on turnout as a percentage of voting age population and as a percentage of registered voters.

**5.** ***The State Board of Elections and local election boards should promote the availability of one-stop, no-excuse voting and mail-in voting as two vehicles for making voting more convenient and possibly increasing turnout.*** Experience with mail voting in Oregon and Washington State provides strong evidence that voting by mail has great potential to boost election turnout. Oregon saw a turnout of 66 percent of its voting age population in 1996 for a special U.S. Senate race—even with only one race on the ballot. Oregon's turnout in presidential races also improved from 57.1 percent in 1996 to 60.5 percent in 2000 in its first experiment with an all-mail presidential election ballot. Washington state, where voters have the option of casting ballots by mail, has seen the share of participants choosing this method of voting increase to more than half the electorate. North Carolina's own experience with one-stop no-excuse absentee voting in the 2000 presidential election—a voting method chosen by 13.5 percent of the state's voters—also holds potential for improving turnout. In the 2002 general election, 7.1 percent of voters chose one-stop, no-excuse absentee voting—a decrease in the percentage of voters using this method but still a significant proportion of the state's electorate. When mail-in ballots were included, the total for absentee ballots cast in 2002 rose to 9 percent.

These methods decrease lines and waiting for those who choose to vote on traditional election day. With further promotion as to the availability of both of these options, the state can expect more people to choose to cast their ballots in alternative ways. With expanded choice and convenience, it stands to reason that the electorate will expand as well. As the percentage of persons choosing alternatives to traditional election day voting swells, the state can get a better sense of the demand for these options and perhaps ultimately lessen its reliance on the vast network of retail outlets for voting that today's polling places represent.

**6.** ***North Carolina should encourage local experimentation with all-mail elections to determine if this method holds promise for boosting turnout—as may have been the case in Oregon.*** All-mail elections hold the potential to solve a range of problems plaguing the state's elections system, including the difficulty of finding 10,000 poll workers willing to staff local polling places across North Carolina. Any issues concerning convenience of voting could be laid to rest, be they work schedules or long lines at polling places. Voting could be as convenient as paying the power bill. A further benefit would be that the state would have to do more to educate voters, which would increase the odds of a better turnout. In the 2002 general election, Oregon experienced turnout of 69 percent of registered voters compared to North Carolina's turnout of 46 percent of registered voters (36.4 percent of the state's voting age population). Of great encouragement in Oregon was that the demographics of vote by mail were the same as that of polling place voters. Any differences tended to favor traditionally underrepresented voters (such as minorities, younger voters, and voters of lower socio-economic status). Of further encouragement to Oregon officials were the facts that (a) 77 percent of voters preferred voting by mail to traditional polling place elections, (b) less than 1 percent felt their vote was coerced by those around them, and (c) requiring the voter to provide the postage had little or no adverse effect on participation. Oregon has a long history of voter turnout that exceeds North Carolina's. It may be the state that has the most lessons to teach. North Carolina should experiment with all-mail elections either through financing a series of local elections or through a statewide special election. Through such experimentation, the state can find its own formula for boosting turnout.

**7.** ***The North Carolina General Assembly should mandate experiments on the potential of Internet voting and casting ballots via cyberspace.*** Advocates of Internet voting say it isn't a matter of whether Tar Heels ultimately will be casting ballots via home computer, but when. The consensus seems to be that security concerns such as the lack of an adequate digital signature and concerns about a technological divide between haves and have-nots and young and old make this option less feasible for the immediate future. But these kinds of issues may well prove to be of short duration, and experiments with Internet voting would dovetail nicely with voting by mail. Voters could have the option of casting their ballot via the Internet or by mail, and staff intensive, precinct-level polling places could be phased out at some point in the not-too-distant future. California has outlined an approach that would ease the state into cyber-voting in four progressively less restrictive stages. California would: (1) begin with the option of allowing the

voter to cast a ballot via the Internet at the precinct where the voter is actually registered, and follow that step with (2) Internet voting at any polling site, regardless of whether the voter is registered at that particular precinct; (3) move to multiple-location voting kiosks outside the traditional polling site where persons could cast an Internet vote; and finally, (4) allow the option of voting via the Internet from home.

North Carolina would do well to emulate this approach. As State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett, Rep. Martin Nesbitt (D-Buncombe), and others believe, it's not a question of whether North Carolina voters will cast their ballot over the Internet but when. To account for the uneven distribution of home computers and computer skills, voters could be provided a package of information on candidates and issues on the ballot as well as voting procedure (see recommendation 1(a)) and could choose to vote via the Internet or mail back their ballot in an envelope provided.

**8.** ***The General Assembly should enact legislation to grant state and private sector employees time off without penalty to vote.*** Of the top 10 states in voter participation in the 2000 presidential election, seven offer some amount of time off for state employees, private sector employees, or both to vote without penalty of losing their pay or job. Iowa, for example, provides state and private sector employees up to three hours to cast their ballots. Oregon offers "a reasonable amount of time," according to the Federal Election Commission. Granting time off with pay for employees to vote would send a strong signal as to the importance our state places on its citizens' casting a ballot. An added bonus is spreading the demand for services at polling places more evenly across the day, compared to the swell of voters who cast their ballot before or after typical working hours. North Carolina is one of only 14 states that has no voting holiday or time-off arrangement.

## Recommendations To Ensure Accuracy of the Count

If North Carolina is to increase drastically the numbers of its citizens going to the polls, it must also ensure that these voters can be accommodated and that their ballots actually will be counted and counted accurately. Nothing can be more discouraging to a newcomer to the polls than to be made to feel unwelcome through administrative mix-ups or problems with voting machines. And even more devastating to democracy—as Florida residents learned along with the rest of the nation—is the notion that a vote cast was never counted. Except for isolated incidents such as the recent machine failure in Robeson County, North Carolina has generally done well in this regard. The state has been cautious about testing machinery in advance of elections, and in close races, North Carolina has a solid system for recounts and appeals. But the state could be headed toward a decade of parity between the two political parties, which would mean a lot of close elections. This will require better voting machinery and increased training of local elections officials.

**9.** ***The General Assembly should move all counties toward a uniform system of voting by direct record electronic devices by 2008. The cost should be spread out by providing full funding by 2005 to the two counties using paper ballots, four counties using mechanical lever devices, and eight counties using punch card systems to replace these outmoded technologies. By 2007, the state should provide full funding to pay for direct record electronic voting equipment in the 51 counties currently relying on optical scanning to count ballots.*** This course of action would require a two-phased approach. In phase one, the General Assembly should provide full funding to the total of 14 counties using paper ballots, mechanical lever devices, and punch cards to upgrade to more technologically advanced and accurate systems. There are two technology options for moving the state to a uniform system of voting: optical scanners using Marksense technology or direct record electronic devices (DREs). Upgrading to optical scanners using Marksense in 14 counties is the less costly option at about $2 million. Moving the state to DRE technology would cost substantially more, about $8.2 million, but it is a bargain for democracy within a $14 billion state budget at less than five one-hundredths of a percent and in keeping with the longer-term goal of moving the entire state to one uniform system using direct record electronic devices.

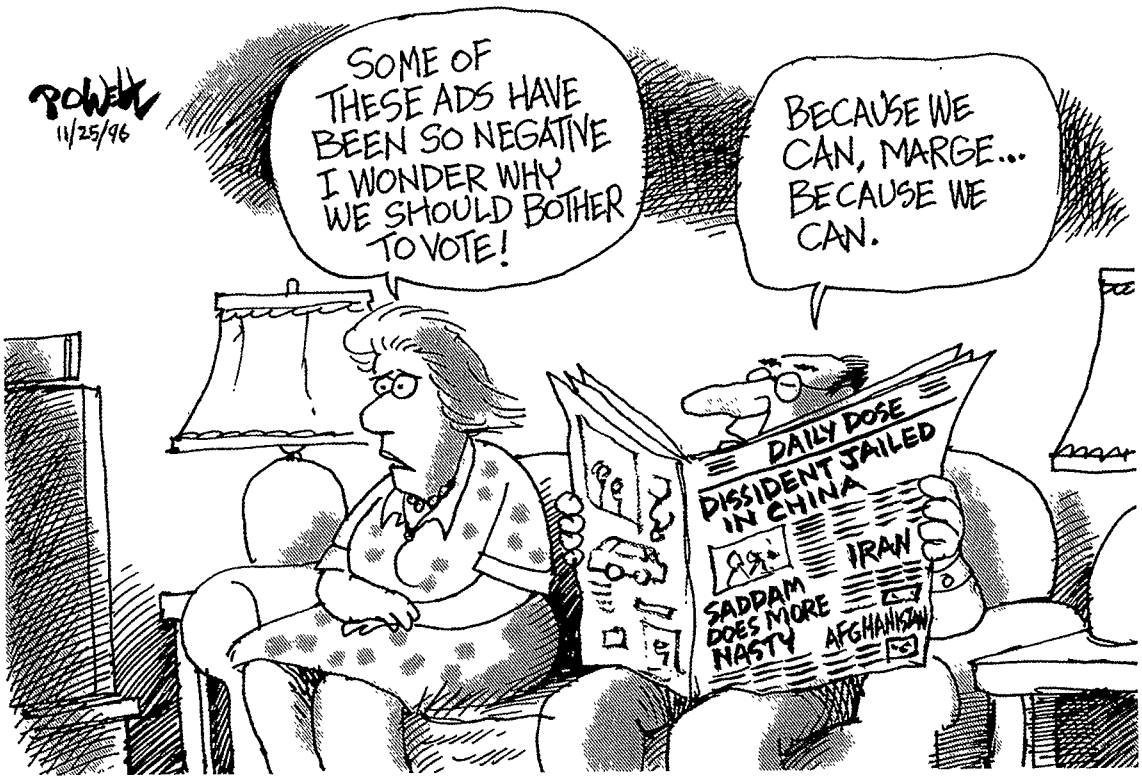
Phase two would require the state to convert all 100 counties to a mixed system of direct record electronic devices. A mixed system would standardize system types across the state while allowing for various equipment manufacturers to compete for individual markets, preventing monopoly while guaranteeing high levels of service and maintenance. Alternatively, the state could consider outfitting the entire state from a single vendor if public bidding offered substantial savings and issues concerning maintenance and ser-

vice could be satisfied. Optical Scan/Marksense should be reserved for absentee voting by mail.

Direct record electronic devices using touch-screen or keypad voting provide the latest available technology in conducting modern elections. In the long run, elections will be cheaper to administer due to the necessity of printing fewer paper ballots. Machines can be reprogrammed to account for new elections and candidates and voter intent can be recorded on tape similar to cash register receipts that can be reviewed in the event of a machine malfunction. Georgia outfitted its entire state with direct record electronic devices for the 2002 general election for $52.3 million—a relative bargain in terms of converting an entire state with a population slightly larger than North Carolina's to the latest in electronic voting technology. Maryland and Oklahoma have taken the same approach. State Board of Elections director Gary Bartlett believes it would cost $80 million to $100 million to outfit the entire state with a uniform system of direct record electronic voting devices on a piecemeal basis. But Bartlett estimates the state could save $20 to $30 million by purchasing a uniform system from the same vendor—as was the experience in Georgia.

**10.** ***The General Assembly should establish a four-year term for members of county boards of elections and precinct election judges.*** Instituting longer terms of office would allow these individuals, who work closest to the actual voting process, to benefit from greater expertise in working elections and would provide them more opportunities for training. Capitalizing on the heightened skills gained only through experience would minimize the need for retraining and increase the efficiency of the voting process. A four-year commitment up front will lessen turnover among precinct workers who do not stick with the task long-term and help to ensure a solid performance among precinct workers.

**11.** ***The State Board of Elections should take steps to more strongly encourage completion of its Certification in Elections Program for*** **all** ***members of county boards of elections.*** Completion of this existing program designates boards of elections members as "Certified Elections Officials." County election *directors* currently are required to complete the program, but not the rest of local board members. The training incorporates courses in election budget preparation, voter registration, and election law. Making




*Dwane Powell,* The News & Observer, *Raleigh, N.C.*

this program mandatory would guarantee that board of elections members in all 100 counties successfully complete a common, uniform training curriculum. However, State Board of Elections Director Gary Bartlett points out that many election board members would resign if faced with a requirement to take such training. Thus, the Center recommends that the state find a way to more strongly encourage all local elections workers to complete the training necessary to conduct error-free elections.

**12. *The State Board of Elections should develop uniform mandatory training programs and materials for election judges in all counties.*** Currently, precinct election judges must attend instructional sessions for which they are minimally compensated. Since training programs are designed by county boards of elections, there is no assurance of uniformity statewide. The state should take a more active role in establishing basic training guidelines that apply in all 100 counties. Training should include sessions on law and procedures, the operation of new technology, machine-testing methodology, and handling equipment breakdowns and other potential problem situations at polling places.

* * *

Changing the way North Carolina conducts elections is no easy task. There are many players and many layers of government involved. Nonetheless, the Center believes it is time for change. The 2000 Florida presidential election awakened us to what can happen when the closeness of an election overwhelms the system's ability to produce an accurate count. And, North Carolina's own history informs us of our lethargy and poor record when it comes to voter turnout on election day. Such complacency can be lethal to the democratic process. Thus, the Center believes it necessary to jump start the state's participation in the Democratic process. With memories of the Florida debacle receding, now is the time to act, lest the state—like Rip Van Winkle of yore—sink even deeper into its civic slumber.

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# What We in the U.S. Can Learn from Argentina and Chile About Citizen Participation and Civic Education

by Ran Coble

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Center Director Ran Coble has a long-standing interest in citizen participation and civic education in North Carolina and the nation. He sees evidence of a decline in civic engagement through such indicators as a decline in voter participation, fewer persons expressing a willingness to sit on a jury, less interest in the study of government and democracy on the part of students, and a perceived lack of public interest in public policy and civic affairs as measured by declining newspaper readership, polls expressing less confidence in government institutions, and other measures. In 2001, Coble was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship. The Eisenhower Fellowship was established after World War II to bring foreign citizens to the United States to learn about U.S. society and government. More recently, the program has sponsored U.S. citizens to study how people in other cultures handle problems held in common with the U.S. Coble's fellowship enabled him to travel to Argentina and Chile to study efforts to educate and engage the citizenry of these younger democracies. Here is some of what he learned—excerpted from a longer report.*

There is good evidence of a 40-year decline in citizen participation in many forms in the United States and North Carolina—from voting, to knowledge of public affairs, to simply reading a newspaper. Here are some indicators of this alarming decline, as catalogued by Harvard University professor Robert Putnam and others.

- From 1920, when women got the vote, through 1960, voter turnout in presidential elections rose at the rate of 1.6 percent every four years, but voter participation has declined from a high of 62.8 percent of *voting age* Americans in 1960 to 51.0 percent in 2000.
- The percentage of *registered* voters turning out for Presidential elections in North Carolina has steadily declined from 73 percent in 1992 to around 57 percent in 2000.
- With the exception of the 1992 election, the youngest category of voters consistently has the lowest turnout rates. In North Carolina, less than one-third of our 18 to 24-year-olds voted in 2000.
- Political knowledge and interest in public affairs is also down. "The average college graduate today knows little more about public affairs than did the average high school graduate in the 1940s," says Putnam. And, more than 20 percent of U.S. teenagers do not know that the U.S. declared independence from Britain, with 14 percent believing that the colonial ruler was France.
- About one-third of North Carolina students fail the end-of-course test for high school civics, and less than 10 percent are considered proficient.
- The 1999 Nation's Civics Report Card, a U.S. Department of Education assessment of civics knowledge in grades K–12, found that 75 percent of high school seniors were not proficient. North Carolina students scored in the bottom third, below the national average.
- A 1997 study by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation showed that most students in North Carolina believe that learning about government and politics is irrelevant and boring. They do not perceive it as important to their future careers or their lives.
- The frequency of virtually every form of community involvement measured in Roper polls declined significantly, from the most common—petition signing (down 22 percent from 1973–74 to 1993–94) to the least common—running for office (down 16 percent).
- "Daily newspaper readership among people under thirty-five dropped from two-thirds in 1965 to one-third in 1990, at the same time that TV news viewership in this same age group fell from 52 percent to 41 percent," writes Putnam. "Today's under thirties pay less attention to the news and know less about current events than their elders do today or than people their age did two or three decades ago."
- In the last third of the century, Putnam says "active involvement in face-to-face organizations has plummeted, whether we consider organizational records, survey reports, time diaries, or consumer expenditures. . . . During the last third of the twentieth century formal membership in organizations in general has edged downward by perhaps 10–20 percent. More important, active involvement in clubs and other voluntary organizations has collapsed at an astonishing rate, more than halving most indices of participation within barely a few decades."
- Another indicator of citizenship—responding to the national census—shows decline. "Voluntary returns of mail census forms declined by more than a quarter between 1960 and 1990, with the lowest rates of return among young people, African Americans, and those detached from community institutions." Even the obligatory act of serving on juries evidences a rise in people simply not showing up when called.
- "In the 1990s roughly three in four Americans *didn't* trust government to do what is right most of the time."[1]

I selected the data above because they represent a possible list of many of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy, for example,

- voting,
- answering the census,
- serving on juries,
- paying taxes,
- respecting and following the laws,
- educating yourself about politics and public policy issues and deliberating on issues facing one's community or country; and
- participating in solving community problems or service to others.

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What can be done to reverse this long-standing decline? A good source of ideas may be the younger, more experimental democracies of South America. I went to Argentina and Chile to study their efforts in citizen participation and civic education in May and June of 2001 under an Eisenhower Fellowship. I went for four reasons really. First, I had been to Argentina twice before in 1990 and 2000 and to Chile in 1993, and therefore knew a little more about these countries than others. Second, Argentina is the country with the third most Eisenhower Fellows in the world—behind only the United States and China, and Chile has 25 Fellows, each of whom has studied some issue in the United States and therefore likely would be a resource, a pool of talented people upon which I could draw. Third, in just 20 years of recovered democracy, Argentina has developed the largest nonprofit sector per capita in South America, and this seemed to indicate something was going on in civil society. Chile—though ruled by the military from 1973 to 1989—has the longest democratic history of any country in South America. And fourth, I had been very impressed in my previous visits to Argentina and Chile with the range of activity and experimentation in citizen participation and civic education. Something was going on.

A quick word about context. I was traveling in Argentina at a time when the economy had been in recession for almost four years. Nearly 20 percent of Argentina's budget goes toward paying off its debt, and in 2002, the country declared default on its $141 billion public debt. There is 22 percent unemployment, and in the last five years, 85 percent of the population saw its income drop by 20 to 40 percent. While I was there, the national airline went bankrupt, there were demonstrations in the streets almost every day, and former President Carlos Menem was arrested on corruption charges. A few months after I left, President Fernando de la Rua resigned, and the country had five Presidents in three months. At the same time in Chile, the Supreme Court ruled that former dictator General Augusto Pinochet could not be tried for human rights abuses during his regime from 1973 to 1990 because of his deteriorating health and mental dementia. Both countries continue to deal with legacies of military governments which tortured and killed their citizens in the 1970s and 1980s.

Most people in the United States associate Argentina with the tango, gaucho cowboys, the tennis players Guillermo Vilas and Gabriela Sabatini, the song, "Don't Cry For Me Argentina," and Evita Perón. I also associate Argentina with their great writers, and one of them, Jorge Luis Borges, captured the double feeling of loyalty to one's own country and of fondness for friends in another country. In "Another Poem of Gifts," Borges writes:

*"I want to give thanks to the divine*
*Labyrinth of causes and effects*
*For the diversity of beings*
*That form this singular universe . . .*
*For love, which lets us see others*
*As God sees them, . . .*
*For the art of friendship . . .*
*For the bravery and happiness of others,*
*For my country, sensed in jasmine flowers . . ."*[2]

In Argentina and Chile, I visited and conducted 85 interviews in 11 cities and towns, including interviews with 60 individuals or organizations in Argentina and 25 in Chile. These included nonprofits working in citizen participation and civic education, such as Poder Ciudadano and Conciencia in Argentina and Participa and Forja in Chile. They included neighborhood associations and grassroots efforts, such as Red Solidaria, and church organizations, such as Caritas in Argentina and Hogar de Cristo in Chile. They also included local and provincial government officials in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario, Mar del Plata, and Bariloche in Argentina, as well as Santiago, Las Condes, Huechuraba, and Temuco in Chile, as well as national officials in President Ricardo Lagos' office in Chile and the Ministry of Education in Argentina. They also included high-level military officers and some business people in banking, the media, and polling in Argentina and shipping and job training in Chile, as well as researchers and professors in universities and in think tanks (Novum Millenium, CIPPEC, CEDES, Libertad, and Global in Argentina and Jaime Guzman, Chile Veinte y Uno, the Center of Public Studies, and the UN Development Programme in Chile). Finally, I interviewed leaders at grantmaking foundations, such as the Navarro Viola Foundation and Kellogg Foundation office in Argentina, as well as fellows in other leadership programs (Kellogg International Fellows and Ashoka Fellows) in both Argentina and Chile.

Here are some capsule descriptions of the most significant programs and innovations in citizen participation and civic education—work I'd love to see replicated in North Carolina and the United States.

# Efforts in Citizen Participation by Argentina's Nonprofit and Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Sector

## FUNDACIÓN PODER CIUDADANO
## (Citizen Power Foundation)

In 1989, six Argentines founded a new nonprofit organization to promote citizen participation and social responsibility. The nonprofit's name, Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power), was the subject of much discussion among the three women and three men who founded it. Marta Oyhanarte, now a Buenos Aires city legislator, proposed the name, but others objected, saying it sounded too strong and too authoritarian. But Oyhanarte replied, "No, citizens need to recognize that they have power," and the group agreed. In 1992, she published a book titled *How To Exercise Your Citizen Power.* In that book, she writes, "On October 30, 1983 [the date of Argentina's first elections in 10 years] we believed that democracy had triumphed, when in reality what had triumphed was the *idea* of democracy. We had to construct a real democracy starting from the essential element that constitutes it: '**the power of the citizen**. [Bold in the original]'"[3]

Twelve years later, Poder Ciudadano has a remarkable history of creating exemplary programs to foster citizen participation and responsibility and to hold government accountable, including the following:

- A Commitment Papers Program was instituted in the early 1990s to get government officials to commit to meet regularly with citizens. Public officials were asked to *listen* to citizens' ideas and concerns, not make speeches or answer questions in a way that made officials the sole experts, which is the way many public hearings in the United States are conducted. Poder Ciudadano then reported on how many public officials appeared and whether they actually listened.
- Today, the group promotes and trains citizens in using four mechanisms for participation—

***Some famous figures in Argentine history on a balcony in La Boca, a colorful artists' neighborhood in Buenos Aires.***

*Ran Coble*

how to gain access to information and how to use it, public hearings, ombudsmen, and *ampara*, or class action lawsuits. Poder Ciudadano's Francisco Cullen, a lawyer, says, "Public hearings provide a space for citizens to participate *before* a governmental body makes a final decision, so we promote this concept." The group monitors public hearings to see whether everyone who signs up to speak actually gets to speak, whether everyone is granted equal time, and whether experts are qualified to give an opinion. The group also promotes the creation of positions of ombudsmen to defend the rights of citizens at the city and national levels, as well as in some provinces. *Ampara* class actions are used to litigate public interest cases and help citizens exercise fundamental rights.

- In February 2001, the group initiated a project called "Participate in the Budget." The goal, says Poder Ciudadano's Carolina Varsky, is "to translate the city budget into common language" that any citizen can understand and ensure that public officials involve citizens in preparation of the budget. The ultimate goal is to provide citizen input on budget priorities in their district, propose new priorities, and then play an active role in execution of the budget.

There is no word in Spanish for "accountability," a hole in the language that may be an indicator of a hole in the fabric of Argentine democracy. Out of such a belief, Poder Ciudadano has a variety of programs designed to hold elected officials and government agencies accountable, including:

- Under its Transparent Elections Program, the group monitors compliance by mayoral candidates with the City of Buenos Aires' campaign finance law and issues reports to the media and the public. About 450 candidates are providing information on their contributions and expenditures.
- Poder Ciudadano is the Argentine chapter of Transparency International, which has national chapters in 75 countries around the world, including 14 in Latin America. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index

***Marta Oyhanarte, now a Buenos Aires city legislator, was one of the three women and three men who founded Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power). She is the wife of a "disappeared" person.***


*Jane Kendall*


***Poder Ciudadano's Silvana Lauzán, with Ran Coble (left) and Carlos March, Poder's director (right)***

measures perceived corruption among public officials, and the 2001 Index says Argentina is tied with China at 57th in a ranking of 91 countries, with number 91 the most corrupt.[4] The group was successful in getting President Fernando de la Rua's government to sign an agreement on monitoring of major infrastructure projects. The agreement under the Program for Transparent Contracting guarantees public hearings and sanctions against bribery. Also, as part of its anti-corruption program, Poder Ciudadano promotes a National Day for the Fight Against Corruption and is discussing the idea of creating a Democracy Ambulance.

- The group publishes a Data Bank on Argentine Politicians, which includes their educational and occupational backgrounds, financial statements, political activities, and organizational affiliations. The group also asks how available politicians are to meet with citizens and how many times the group had to call the officials for this data.
- To foster citizen participation among youth, Poder Ciudadano started a Classrooms Without Borders Program involving about 600 teachers in primary, secondary, and high schools. The program gives awards to the three schools that are the most innovative in inculcating civic values. One of the winners, a special school for disabled kids in Ezeiza, constructed a radio station inside the school. The production, technology, and broadcasts are all managed by the students, and the station is now "a social service voice for the community," says Poder Ciudadano's Silvana Lauzán.
- Another educational program for youth, the Young Negotiators Program, has trained more than 4,000 children in settling their own disputes and solving problems without violence in schools.

One of the biggest barriers to citizen participation is helping citizens overcome the belief that what they do won't make a difference. Indeed, that feeling of powerlessness is what brought her to this work in the first place, says Lauzán. A veteran worker at Poder Ciudadano since she was 16 years old, she adds, "I didn't want to feel so alone when I felt so angry."

To share citizen experiences in solving public problems, Poder Ciudadano now is moving into the media and creating Infocivica, a "civic news agency." Since October 2000, the group has produced short two-to-three-minute broadcasts that are inserted between regular TV programs and aired four times a day (between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. and at 10:45 a.m., 4:45 p.m., and 7:45 p.m.), Monday through Friday, on Channel 6, a private TV channel. They show individuals, neighbors, and NGOs solving problems and making a difference in Argentine society. These "Moments of Citizen Power," as they are called, further the group's goal

of creating a tradition of participation and involvement in the public sphere. It is a tradition, says Francisco Cullen, that echoes those citizens described in Jorge Luis Borges' poem, "The Just":

*"A man who cultivates his garden, as Voltaire wished.*
*He who is grateful for the existence of music.*
*He who takes pleasure in tracing an etymology.*
*Two workmen playing, in a café in the South, a silent game of chess.*
*The potter, contemplating a color and a form.*
*The typographer who sets this page well, though it may not please him.*
*A woman and a man, who read the last tercets of a certain canto.*
*He who strokes a sleeping animal.*
*He who justifies, or wishes to, a wrong done him.*
*He who is grateful for the existence of Stevenson.*
*He who prefers others to be right.*
*These people, unaware, are saving the world."*[5]

## FARN: Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Foundation for the Environment and Natural Resources)

The problem in Argentina's new democracy, thought the founding lawyers of FARN in 1986, was the way public decisions were made. Environmental policy was the arena in which they chose to put public participation on the public agenda. Their goals are a three-pronged effort to seek public access to public information, access to government decisionmaking, and access to justice.

Only two jurisdictions in Argentina—Buenos Aires and Chubut—give the public access to public information, and there are no national laws analogous to the Freedom of Information Act in the United States or to state laws in the U.S. guaranteeing access to open meetings and public records. In addition to the lack of laws is a cultural norm where public officials refuse to provide copies of government documents or policies. Argentines need a system where citizens asking for information don't depend on how public officials feel that day, says FARN's deputy director, Daniel Ryan.

FARN's work in gaining citizen access to government decisionmaking focuses on improving the amount and quality of public participation in public hearings. In 1995, they published a Manual on Public Participation. This easy-to-read guide discusses the benefits of such participation and includes a draft rule cities can adopt on how to conduct a public hearing and maximize participation. Ryan points to the City of Buenos Aires as a jurisdiction that has misused the public hearing mechanism. Though the city has held 200 public hearings, Ryan says hearings are held on less important items such as changing the names of streets, but not on more important issues like a law that created a corporation to manage all public lands in the city.


Ran Coble

***Daniel Ryan, FARN's deputy director***

FARN conducts workshops for NGOs in Córdoba and Jujuy on how they can participate and take advantage of opportunities presented by public hearings. The workshops include roleplaying, advocacy strategies, and the pros and cons of public hearings. FARN also is training local government officials themselves in how to conduct public hearings. This is being done in small city halls in Patagonia in the south, and in Jujuy in the north. Now the group has been asked by some local governments in Jujuy and Puerto Madryn to draft regulations for conducting public hearings.

Another FARN effort includes Policy Dialogues where the group brings together the main stakeholders on an environmental issue, including

government officials, businesses, and NGOs. They first agree on a list of issues to discuss and then try to produce a specific policy agenda to carry out. For example, in Jujuy, the poorest region of Argentina, they have agreed on an agenda that includes land use, sustainable development and tourism, and the sustainability of democratic institutions and public participation. Future policy dialogues are planned in Bariloche, Córdoba, and Mar del Plata.

The third prong of FARN's citizen participation efforts is to seek legal access to justice for individual citizens and groups. FARN picks cases where the environmental issue is significant, the legal consequence is great, and the people are demanding their legal rights. FARN wants to create a network of lawyers interested in public interest environmental lawsuits. In its policy dialogues and public hearings, FARN is known for first getting the parties together to talk. But where enforcement of environmental laws is at stake or where corruption is an issue, litigation is FARN's back-up tool of choice.

## Enlarging the Public in Public Participation

***Bringing Women and Youth into the Civic Conversation***

### CONCIENCIA (Conscience, or Awareness)

After the Malvinas, or Falkland Islands War in 1982, Argentina started its return to democracy. However, as Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati puts it, "Everybody wanted to go back to democracy, but few of us knew how democracy worked." Scacciati is first vice president of Conciencia, a nonprofit founded in 1982 by María Rosa Segura de Martini and 21 other women. They chose to concentrate on civic participation by women because they thought the multiplying effect of women would be greater. Not only were they 51 percent of the population, but women also were mothers who could teach their children about democracy, and they were the large majority (80 percent) of the teachers. Women are looked upon as "the transmitters of the excellence of the culture and of societal values," says a Conciencia brochure.

Martini's brother was the head of Mary Kay Cosmetics in Argentina at the time, so the women decided to borrow the Mary Kay method of selling cosmetics and sell democracy instead. Each of the leaders invited 12 to 15 women to their homes for coffee and biscuits and asked them if they knew about the new Argentine Constitution, how to vote, and their opinions about needs of the country. Gradually, the group developed a seven-week course on democracy, holding the course in donated theater spaces throughout Buenos Aires, with 200 to 250 people in each location.

After the second year of classes and the first democratic elections, people didn't seem that interested in the Constitution any more, so Conciencia redirected its efforts to train women leaders for the new democracy. Then after a few more years, the needs of the country seemed to shift again, and the group began concentrating on the civic education of youth.

Conciencia now has 36 chapters in 22 provinces in Argentina, as well as chapters in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. To its credit, the group evaluates every program after six months and after a year or two years. For example, in its program on teaching students democratic values, they count how many teachers are initially working with the program after six

***Mauricio, a student volunteer of Conciencia, (left to right), Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati, vice president, and Silvia Uranga, president***

*Ran Coble*

months. One year later, they ask how many other teachers are trained to gauge the multiplying effect. They also ask the students themselves to evaluate the program.

In Project Citizen, the students examine a local area and decide on a project to fill a local need. The students are asked to talk to their fellow citizens, conduct research on what government is doing about the problem, and study what the press writes about it. Legislators and local officials are invited to be the judges of the projects. The students often end up with a close relationship with the mayor, learn to talk to the press, and always receive a prize of some sort—all to encourage future citizen involvement by youth. The program uses a curriculum originally developed in the United States but rarely used in U.S. schools because of the time and expense required to implement it.[6]

In Tigre, a municipality on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, a group of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders chose a project dealing with a local pig problem. A few families bred pigs but let the animals roam the streets. The pig waste got into a nearby waterway, so the kids' goal was to contain the pigs and clean the waterway. Conciencia's materials walk the youth through four steps: (1) first, analyze the problem and state why you chose it; (2) describe who you interviewed and what those people said; (3) describe the laws involved and at what level of government this problem can be treated; and (4) give the advantages and disadvantages of various solutions and what is proposed to be done. Later, the youth are urged to measure the consequences of their actions. Today, the pigs are in a pen, and the waste is out of the water.

Scacciati says there now are two big challenges now facing Conciencia and Argentina. "The biggest is for people to realize that the only way out for this country is education. People know how to put their ballot inside of a box, but they don't know how to choose," she says. The other challenge is for people in Argentina to recognize "that we are responsible. We are always throwing responsibility to other people or other organizations or other countries." With that in mind, Conciencia's next program is designed to get the people out of that condition and into the condition of responsibility. The program will be called Rescuing the Citizen.

*Ran Coble*

***La Luciérnaga (Lightning Bug) works with street children, one of whom is shown here with the group's director, Oscar Arias (left).***

## Bringing the Poor into the Civic Conversation

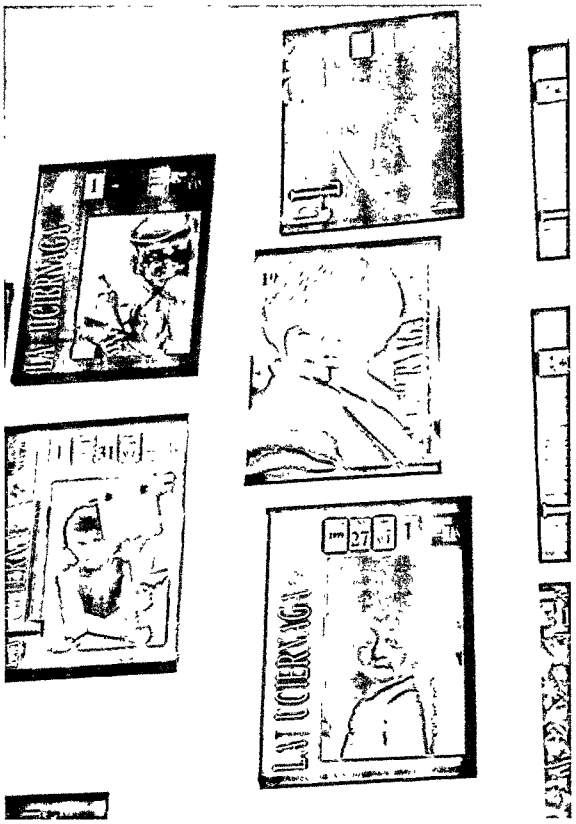
FUNDACIÓN LA LUCIÉRNAGA (Lightning Bug)

Many nonprofit groups in the United States provide services to the poor, but few attempt to bring them into public policy debates or encourage their participation as citizens. But that's what a nonprofit called La Luciérnaga (Lightning Bug) does in its work with street children. The group's director, Oscar Arias, shares the name of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning President of Costa Rica, but works with youth and adolescents from Córdoba's *villas miserias*, or misery villages. The group's motto, "To Beg Nevermore" is inscribed on their magazine, which is sold monthly in the streets for one peso by the youths, wearing their trademark short pants. Seventy-five percent of the sales revenue goes to the youth themselves, thereby providing "a respectable salary," says Arias, of about $15 a day and, most importantly, "work with dignity."

The other 25 percent of the proceeds goes to the nonprofit's program. One of those programs is the Little School of La Luciérnaga. Because many of these children have dropped out of school or been expelled, the nonprofit started a special school for them, especially emphasizing workshops in expression through literature, music, comics, and computers. Many of the best of these expressions find their way into the magazine. The 23-page April 2001 issue I bought on the street contains an interview with one of the youth, a cartoon, photos of the youths cleaning windshields in the streets, a box of statistics on youth in poverty, life stories of some of the youth, a short story in fiction, and an editorial entitled "Yes to work, no to exploitation."

Arias says the nonprofit also has an informal education program that provides free breakfasts. "But the cook is not a cook but an educator. It's a way to bring them to learn," he says. The breakfasts give the kids the daily spaces to share reflections on drugs, the violence in their families, or other problems, he adds. All told, Luciérnaga serves 400 homeless youth in Córdoba and four other cities, and the group now sells 45,000 magazines.

The magazine is one form of citizen participation because the articles—almost all written and published by the youth themselves—help educate the public on the causes of homelessness and problems of street youth. The stories help the public better understand the youth and think of them in a different way. For example, says Arias, when a teacher buys the magazine and reads a poem or a story, it makes her more sensitive to that youth; he is not just a number any more. "We believe a new link has been created between the community and the kids," he says.



Ran Coble

***Cover photos of La Luciérnaga's magazine***

The magazine also is a vehicle for the youth to put certain proposals before the public. In February 2001, the police arrested youths who were begging on the street to help their mothers who needed money to support their families. The mothers protested by blocking a street and were also arrested. The local newspaper interviewed Arias, who said the government shouldn't punish poverty but deal with what caused the mothers and youth to do this. "They had a right to survive," he said, "even in this form, and the solution is not jail but work." Arias asked 40 mothers if they'd negotiate with government, and they agreed. The result was two new programs, one called Madres Guapas and the other called Autorrescate, or Self-Rescue.

Madres Guapas literally means Handsome Mothers, a compliment, but it also carries the meaning of "willing to work," another example of

the Argentine talent for using the double meanings of the Spanish language. In this program, the mothers do community work for pay, which legitimizes their demand for work, says Arias. The mothers also agree that the kids will go to school and not beg in the street. The result so far, says Arias, is that 139 mothers and their 550 kids have "retired" from street life.

Another example of participation by the youth comes from Rodrigo Agrelo, a deputy and vice president of the House of Representatives for the province of Córdoba. Agrelo and fellow deputy Sofanor Novillo Corvalán introduced a bill to forbid the sale of a certain chemical glue to minors. The glue was normally used to stick rugs to floors, but poor youth were using the glue as a cheap high. An estimated 3,000 kids were using this drug, which can cause severe damage to the lungs and nervous system. La Luciérnaga youth went to the media and the legislature in support of the bill, and now it is law, says Agrelo. He says he admired the youth for doing this since it contradicted the public's views of street kids because they were the ones assumed to be using this drug.

One example of how La Luciérnaga turns street kids into citizens in five cities is a woman I'll call Teresa. When she was seven years old, she left home to live in the street with her two little brothers. They all begged or stole to survive. One day, a man came and told her he was going to take her to a home for street kids. Instead, it was a brothel, and she was forced into prostitution for three years. At the age of 10, she escaped, but in order to provide for her brothers, she still sold her body as a prostitute. The three of them lived under bridges. She began living with another boy, and they had children when she was 17.

About this time, someone put them in touch with La Luciérnaga. The group provided income through her sale of magazines and gave her a place to talk about her past and her problems. She and her boyfriend now had four kids to care for, plus her brothers, and some of the children were still begging in the street. They were among those arrested in the February 2001 demonstration, so Teresa is one of the mothers who negotiated with the local government for establishment of the Madres Guapas and Self-Rescue programs. With this new job, Teresa now has a little wood house of her own for the first time and a garden as well. Today, with her husband and a neighbor—all of whom sold Luciérnaga magazines—Teresa runs a dining room for 50 street kids in a neighborhood in a misery village. The government provides work, Luciérnaga provides the food, and Teresa provides the service.

## Showing Citizens That They Can Solve Problems

*"The first job of a citizen is to keep your mouth open."*

—GUNTHER GRASS, GERMAN NOVELIST

### AGRUPACIÓN DE VECINOS (Neighborhood Association) DE VICENTE LOPEZ

The Neighborhood Association in the Vicente Lopez suburb of Buenos Aires (with a population of about 360,000) was formed when a road was built through the neighborhood and destroyed a number of trees. Its purpose, says its president, Victor Bardeci, is to promote citizen participation and improve municipal management. I visited the group on the 567th consecutive Saturday it had met, a remarkable record.

The association has presented more than 70 proposed ordinances to local officials over its 11 years. Its successes include getting the city to create a position of ombudsman to be responsible for acting on citizen complaints. They also organized a demonstration with thousands of cars blocking the Pan American Highway to protest a natural gas pipeline that threatened green spaces in the area. They regularly attend city council meetings and have documented how many exceptions to city laws the council granted from 1992 to 1999, distributing 5,000 copies of this report. The group also has prepared a model ballot and voting manual and produces a data bank of information on local elected officials.

"We analyze what happens in our city and what can be improved," says member Roberto Kretschmayer during my visit. He continues, "At this moment, we are in a stage where our government said a lot of things about popular participation, but then they said go to another place to participate. We can say all things—we have total freedom—but nobody does anything about it. And this is due to the fact that our people are used to

living under military governments, and people don't get involved. Our mission is to change this way of life." Another member of the group laughs and quickly adds, "This is mission impossible."

The group meets from 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturdays in an old school, with its agenda posted on a blackboard. When many might be washing clothes or cars, going to a soccer match, or playing with children, these citizens have met to discuss and solve local problems, Saturday after Saturday, for almost 11 years.

### FUNDACIÓN CIUDAD (City Foundation)

*"If all things are devoid of matter*
*and if this populous Buenos Aires*
*comparable to an army in complexity*
*is no more than a dream*
*arrived at in magic by souls working together*
*there's a moment*
*in which the city's existence is at the brink of danger and disorder*
*and that is the trembling moment of dawn*
*when those who are dreaming the world are few*
*. . . But once more the world comes to its own rescue."*[7]

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, "DAYBREAK"

Buenos Aires is one of the great cities of the world, and the riverfront is one of the city's great assets. It also is the focus of an innovative effort in citizen participation by Fundación Ciudad. The general coordinator of this nonprofit, María Gowland, says, "The waterfront is a great metaphor for knowing your rights, how to develop a place, how to discuss issues, and how to deliberate."

Fundación Ciudad uses community forums styled after those conducted by the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, which produces guides on public policy issues outlining various options and solutions to the problems. Similarly, Fundación Ciudad has produced what they call a "base document" of facts and figures on ideas for development of the Metropolitan Waterfront. As a way of bringing lots of views into the civic conversation, the document includes boxed quotes from many citizens ("Dice la gente," or "the people say"), the media ("Dicen los medios"), and the agency managing the government's water program ("Dice la empresa Aguas Argentinas") throughout the report.[8] "The logic of the forums is 'first, listen to the people,'" says Gowland.

Over five years, more than 2,500 people have participated in Fundación Ciudad's forums. The group tries to bring in participants from all per-

***The purpose of the Neighborhood Association in the Vicente Lopez suburb of Buenos Aires is to promote citizen participation and improve municipal management.***

*Ran Coble*

spectives, including government officials in the executive and legislative branches, the well-to-do who live in the northern part of the waterfront, and the poor who live on the lower land which floods often. "Some come to fight, but we said this is a place for consensus-building," says Gowland.

One strength of the forums is that they give people an opportunity to discuss an issue over time, to listen and to reflect. To the group's credit, it published a later report which showed how citizens' views changed over time. In three columns, the report describes waterfront proposals reached by consensus in 1998, 2000, and 2001 and how these proposals were refined and improved upon reflection.[9] "This is great for Argentines because people here always want to win," says Gowland.

Like the nonprofit group FARN discussed above, Fundación Ciudad is an innovator in thinking about *processes* that encourage citizen participation. The group also thinks about *evaluation* of citizen participation. First, they evaluate the forum guides themselves and whether they can be understood by the average citizen. Second, they do pre- and post-forum polls to measure citizens' understanding of the issues. Third, they count the number of people who attend each forum, as well as those who sign up but don't attend. Fourth, they evaluate the diversity in each group and check whether there are people from nonprofits, government, and business (the most difficult group to get to attend, says Gowland) with young and old, students, and teachers. Finally, they evaluate whether the people's proposals are actually implemented into policy, which goes beyond the Kettering Foundation's process.

Fundación Ciudad was successful in placing the issue of Buenos Aires' metropolitan waterfront on the public agenda and helping shape the final plan. The group also was successful in getting the city and provincial legislatures to designate a special team of legislators to produce legislation for a region larger than the city but smaller than the province—thereby dealing with a problem of regionalism faced by many American communities.

Fundación Ciudad has undertaken three other initiatives—one with forums in Bariloche in southern Argentina, another with cable television, and a third with civic journalism. The initiative in Bariloche is a partnership with the Woodville School in conducting community forums in a ski resort area in the mountains. The group also publicizes its programs and educates the public on its cable TV show called "La Ciudad de Todos" (The City of All).

The civic journalism effort in 1996 was the first in Argentina. Civic journalism makes use of several methods to engage the public, including (a) using opinion polls to uncover issues important to the public; (b) giving more attention to solutions for problems discussed in regular news coverage; (c) providing information on how elected officials stand on issues; (d) organizing public meetings to discuss issues and solutions; and (e) informing readers and viewers on how to vote, contact their elected officials, and participate in the policy process.[10] Fundación Ciudad organized seminars on civic journalism in Córdoba and with the Argentine Press Association in Buenos Aires. The Córdoba effort resulted in a pre-election project with the local newspaper *La Voz del Interior.*

### Red Solidaria (Solidarity Network)

> *As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up a starfish and flinging it to the sea.*
>
> *Finally catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.*
>
> *"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the old man. "How can your effort make any difference?"*
>
> *The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.*
>
> —Anonymous

One of the most significant experiments in citizen participation is an effort to create a culture of solidarity by Juan Carr and others in the Solidarity Network. Carr had a highly developed sense of service early in life. As a student, he decided to study veterinary medicine in order to "put an end to child malnutrition by creating improvements in vegetable and animal production."[11] While at the university, he and a group of friends volunteered with a program providing housing for the homeless. However, after getting his degree and beginning work as a veterinarian in a pet clinic in the dog-lovers paradise of Argentina, he wasn't happy.

In an interview with *Apertura* magazine, he says, "On a February night in 1994, I felt restless and couldn't sleep, no matter how hard I tried. Sud-

denly, I grabbed hold of my wife and said: 'I've got it: The Solidarity Network!'"

He continues, "We knew that Argentina had suffered great pain during the military dictatorship, and we also realized that the Malvinas (Falklands) Islands War had instilled a sense of distrust in our people. We knew too, however, that the sense of solidarity of Argentine people was still intact. The only thing that had to be done was to give it some kind of order and coordinate it, so as to rebuild the chain of solidarity."[12]

Carr discussed this idea with four friends who met regularly to play soccer, and Red Solidaria, or the Solidarity Network, was born. It started in February 1995 with a phone line where people would call with a need—for food, clothing, a wheelchair, some medicine, a hearing aid, type O+ blood, or even an organ transplant. Today, it is still an unbelievably simple system of telephones, a transfer system, and computers—the telephones to receive the requests called in at one number, the transfer system to get the requests to the volunteer on duty at the time, and computers to log in the needs.

A group of about 28 volunteers each works a three-hour shift in their own homes. As a whole, the Network receives about 100 calls a day from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Once a call comes in, the volunteer begins to search for a solution among the nearly 350 NGOs with whom they have working relationships. If they notice a pattern to a problem or a systemic need, they gather people in what they call an "*asemblea solidaria*," or solidarity assembly. Then they ask the community to participate.

Nationwide, the Network has obtained medication for 14,000 indigent cancer patients and collected food and clothing for 200,000 people affected by flooding in northern Argentina. But it is most proud of its work at the individual level in giving the personal touch. Belén Quellet, one of the network volunteers, tells of a group of students who needed books. Red Solidaria found a group of students who had used the same books the previous year, so the older students came back to the school and personally delivered the books.

In another school, a group of students began collecting clothes for the homeless. They took the clothes to a laundry run by youth with disabilities, who taught the students how to wash, iron, and prepare the clothes. Thus, the students learned more about those with disabilities and also were able to deliver clothes to the homeless that they had prepared personally. "These are baby steps in developing a culture of solidarity," says Quellet. "It may take 10 to 15 years."

In Jujuy, a woman called asking for glasses for her seven-year-old daughter. Meanwhile, a network volunteer in Buenos Aires accompanied friends who had been in a car accident to the hospital. The friend ran a shop that sold glasses and asked the volunteer if there was anything he could do to help. Shortly thereafter, the volunteer delivered the glasses to the woman in Jujuy. Quellet says, "The little girl just grabs the glasses, puts them on, and she can see, that was amazing. One by one then, it make sense."

This may sound like an Information and Referral Service in the United States, but it's not. Most such services simply refer a caller to an agency. They don't actually solve the problem. It

***Belén Quellet of Red Solidaria***

*Ran Coble*

also may sound like the Red Cross. But Red Solidaria has no paid staff, no hierarchy, does not accept donations itself, and has no stocks or supplies. It has no delivery mechanisms; it simply links the person with the need to the person who can answer the need and expects them to work it out somehow. Yes, the Network helps with disasters and arranges for blood donations, but there is something larger going on here. It's the network's goal of creating a culture of solidarity, so that everyone, not just the nonprofit and its volunteers or staff, feels responsible.

For example, Quellet describes the Network's efforts on behalf of a boy named Agostín who needed an expensive operation on his spinal cord in the United States. They began raising the $650,000 needed, not by approaching big donors but with a campaign called "Un Peso for Agostín" designed to get 650,000 people to give one peso each to save Agostín's life. One mother went to a shopping center with a picture of Agostín to raise money from passersby. There, some street children saw the picture, asked who Agostín was, and then started opening doors to taxis in the area and asking for contributions. They kept bringing the money back to the woman, asking, "Are we done yet? Do we still have a long way to go?" A businessman also contributed $200,000. And, an elderly pensioner called and said she hadn't received her monthly pension yet, but if they could wait, when she received it, she would send a peso. "We thought that was great," says Quellet. "She understood better than anybody what commitment was."

Quellet knows about commitment too. At 24, she flew to Calcutta, India, rang the bell at Mother Theresa's, and volunteered for one of the toughest assignments—to work with the dying. "We're getting rid of the notion of charity and going a step forward. Solidarity is an act of justice," says Quellet. "You see a need, and it's emotional. We're trying to convert that emotion into a commitment."

Simple traditions can sometimes explain values that are deep within a culture. The value of solidarity deep within Argentine culture is explained by Quellet with a simple example of what happens in Argentina when a child cries out on the beach, "I'm lost." Everyone on the beach nearby will start clapping, and the wave of clapping notifies mothers to locate their children. The mother who has lost her child then knows where to go on the beach to find the child.

Juan Carr and the four friends who founded the Solidarity Network still meet at that same soccer field once a week. Their vision for the future of the movement—and it truly is a movement—includes four new efforts. First, they asked a group of teachers and professionals to think about what was going on in Argentina. The Network asked the teachers to write up a project that doesn't have to do with money but with creating a culture of solidarity. Shortly thereafter, they had 24 teachers with 160 students working on 24 different social problems. Then, the teachers decided to double their efforts with classes in both April and August, which coincides with school semesters in the Southern hemisphere.

The second piece of their vision for the future is to create a network of teachers called the Red Docente de Cultura Solidaria. Quellet is the coordinator for this program, which recognizes that teachers hear about a lot of needs every day that have nothing to do with schooling. A child might say his father is sick, the mother has no insurance, the family has no food. The network wants to use teachers as "*referentes*," or people who simply notify others in the school or community of the need. This is not to turn the teachers into social workers but to recognize their natural leadership role in distributing and referring information, says Quellet.

The third plan for the future is a network of *Orientadores de la Comunidad*. This envisions one "orientor" per 1,000 inhabitants throughout Argentina who knows what to do when a child is missing, when the soup kitchen runs out of food, or a neighbor needs medication for cancer. The idea is to recruit people who know the community and naturally know what to do, such as teachers, nuns, priests, or social workers.

The fourth part of the vision is to spread the work throughout Argentina. Because of their success in Buenos Aires, the Network started getting calls from other provinces. They first expanded in Cipoletti along the Río Negro River in the south. Then another group of volunteers started working in Pilar on the northern outskirts of Buenos Aires. Then other groups followed in Azul, Córdoba, Rauch, Junín, and Bariloche.

Quellet's eyes light up when she talks about the final piece of the vision. She says, "We have a bigger dream that is "globalización solidaria." You know how everybody talks about the economic globalization. Well, we feel that solidarity can go global as well." She describes what the Solidarity

***Free speech demonstrated on a walking mall in Buenos Aires.***


Ran Coble

Network did in Argentina in response to the crisis in Kosovo with its thousands of refugees and warring factions of Christians and Muslims.

The Network went to La Cava, a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and told the teachers and children at a Catholic school about how the children of Kosovo were suffering and being displaced from their homes. Even though the children in La Cava lived in shantytowns, they immediately recognized that they at least had their own houses. The children started writing letters to Kosovo, but the teachers said this wouldn't work, that the people there couldn't understand Spanish. So, the children started drawing pictures. Then, they began collecting rice and cans of food.

A few weeks later, the Network gets a call from the school asking them to come pick up the food and take it to Kosovo. At the same time, an embassy official called and said they'd been receiving food donations too. The Network also approached a Jewish school and got them involved in a similar effort to collect food. Through the Internet, the Network found an NGO in Barcelona, Spain that had trucks delivering food to Kosovo. "If you can get it to Barcelona, we'll get it to Kosovo for you," they said. The Network talked to Aerolineas Argentinas airline and got them to fly the food to Madrid for free. Then an NGO in Madrid took it to Barcelona. Meanwhile, the Network went to a bank and got it to open up a bank account for donations and arranged for a one-peso-to-one-peso transfer to Spain in a campaign called "Un Peso y Una Lata Por Kosovo" (one peso and one can for Kosovo). All of this resulted in a shipment of 28 tons of food to Kosovo.

"So, we had the Catholics and the Jews together for the Muslims in Kosovo," says Quellet, "which was for us one of the signs for globalization. It is possible. And then we had the rich people at a bank and an airline together with the poor of La Cava for the Kosovo refugees. This was our example of *globalización solidaria.* It is possible."

## Involving the Media in Encouraging Citizen Involvement

### La Nación (The Nation) Newspaper

One of the exemplary features of Argentina's efforts in citizen participation is the role of the media in encouraging citizen participation. Newspapers around the U.S. and in North Carolina have attempted to encourage civic participation through efforts like the consortium of newspapers and television stations involved in "Your Voice, Your Vote," which polls N.C. citizens on issues important to them and attempts to have political candidates address those issues. But the Argentine efforts have a different flavor. The country's second largest newspaper, *La Nación,* with its circulation of 250,000, is a leader among the media, especially in its partnership with the Solidarity Network. Indeed, the newspaper has nominated Juan Carr for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Every day, the newspaper publishes what they call Solidarity Classified Ads. Just as you might see classified ads for job openings or cars for sale in any newspaper, *La Nación* publishes 30–35 solidarity classified ads a day, identifying needs around the country—for example, a hospital that needs a certain piece of equipment. The person who can answer this need calls a number at the newspaper, and the call is transferred to a cell phone at the Solidarity Network. Julio Saguier, president of *La Nación,* says the rate of response to these ads is "very high, more than 60 percent."

Every Monday, *La Nación* publishes a Solidarity Page with three or four brief articles about needs. For example, one might read, "Juan is five years old and needs this medication;" another might describe the work of a local NGO. In *La Nación,* this page is called "Página Solidaria" (Solidarity Page). The paper's chief rival, *Clarín,* with a circulation of about 500,000, has now started a similar page called "Gente Solidaria" (Solidarity People). The Solidarity Network provides the information to both newspapers.

Every Thursday, *La Nación* publishes another column highlighting three or four needs. This column is a supplement to the "En Casa" section of the paper.

Finally, once a month, *La Nación* devotes an entire 12-page section of the Sunday newspaper to one of five big themes—(1) children at risk; (2) drug use prevention; (3) solidarity testimonies, with special attention to schools and community (see pages 85–91 below in the civic education section); (4) promotion of voluntarism; and (5) promotion of social responsibility in businesses. So, for example, in the supplement on children at risk, the

newspaper might list all the organizations that work in this field, profile some of them, and perhaps most importantly, tell newspaper readers how they can get involved.

Saguier says, "We give some testimonies, saying to the people that everybody can do something for a kid who is at risk. We show that you don't have to be a priest, or a magician, or crazy to try to help the other ones. Everybody can help his neighbor. We show people who have a huge impact in the community in which they work. So we decided that it was a good thing to do because then people will try to copy them."

Saguier says the newspaper began this work a couple of years ago when they saw a poll by the nonprofit Fundación Compromiso showing that about 87 percent of the people said they wanted to give their time, their money, or their professional help to others, but that about 82 percent of these didn't know how to do this, how to get help to the people who needed it. "We decided to create that channel," says Saguier. "We are a newspaper, so we said, 'Why don't we do it with our newspaper? Why don't we do what we do every single day?' So we created in every day's newspaper the news about this big chapter of reality—people trying to help other people who need that help."

In addition to their partnership with Red Solidaria, *La Nación* also works with *Third Sector* magazine and the NGO umbrella group Foro del Sector Social. Radio and TV stations are beginning to broadcast solidarity stories too. The effect is that when Red Solidaria gets a problem they find difficult to solve, they can resort to *La Nación* or the broadcast media to widen the search for citizen participation in a solution. Meanwhile, Poder Ciudadano's "Moments of Citizen Power" also are being aired four times a day, Monday through Friday, between regular TV programs.

## Tercer Sector and Other Magazines Encouraging Involvement

Many of the exemplary efforts of the media in encouraging citizen involvement can be traced back to Alicia Cytrynblum, editor of *Third Sector* magazine. Cytrynblum also is the general editor for the *La Nación* supplements and writes a weekly

***A special Sunday section of* La Nación *newspaper encourages citizen participation in the schools.***

LA NACION | Buenos Aires, domingo 18 de marzo de

# Escuelas solidarias

APRENDER Y BRINDARSE A LA COMUNIDAD, UN EJEMPLO PARA TODOS

**ciones más allá del pizarrón:** una herramienta para el cambio

Jane Kendall

***Ran Coble with Alicia Cytrynblum, editor of Tercer Sector, and staff***

column about NGOs for *Veintidós* magazine, an anti-establishment political weekly. She notes that magazines in Argentina were pioneers in drawing attention to citizen involvement through NGOs.[13] The business magazine *Apertura, Para Ti, Veintidós,* and the women's magazine *Luna* all feature NGO activities.

*Tercer Sector* magazine was first published in 1995. Cytrynblum says her father, who had worked at *Clarín* for 15 years, realized that there were no reflections of these [NGO and citizen-based] activities. With his help through his role as president of the Aviso Foundation and with the help of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Cytrynblum started *Third Sector* (the third sector is the nonprofit or NGO sector, along with the business and government sectors). At first, she says, people thought the magazine's name was "Third Sex" and that it was a gay magazine, "but gradually they caught on." In terms of citizen participation and NGOs, she says, "It's a good place to show the people how to help."

She says the bimonthly magazine is targeted both to people who work at NGOs and to the general public. For the NGO readers, there are regular departments in the magazine on fundraising, how NGOs are using the Internet, business involvement in communities, NGOs' work in various provinces, and notices of new books, seminars, scholarships, or services. *Tercer Sector* also regularly includes a four-page insert of news from the Foro del Sector Social about that organization's work to build the nonprofit sector. For the general public, there might be features on celebrities like Argentine pro golfer Eduardo "Gato" Romero and his work with charities, an article on how citizens solved a problem in their community, or an interview with an elected official who also volunteers with an NGO. The overall goal is to raise awareness of the nonprofit sector and, says Cytrynblum, to "challenge people—you can do this."

*Third Sector* magazine has a very professional look and has been self-supporting the last two years. It now is sold on newsstands. But there also are newcomers to the world of publications about nonprofits and citizen involvement, such as *Mundo Solidario* in Buenos Aires and *Ciudadanos* in Córdoba. *Mundo Solidario* (Solidarity World) is a 32-page newspaper about "organizations with social ends." It began in September 2000 and focuses on NGOs, the arts, health, legislation, and human rights. *Ciudadanos* (Citizens) "the magazine of civil society"—is produced by students at the Catholic University of Córdoba. The first issue was published in October 2000 with a cover story entitled "What is the Third Sector?" A later issue examined urban poverty and tax reductions and featured an interview with a local businessman

about the business and nonprofit sectors.

*Apertura* normally is a business magazine like *Business Week* in the United States. However, once a year, it devotes an entire issue to the nonprofit sector entitled "Enterprise and Community." Half of the profits of this issue go to Fundación Conpromiso, a nonprofit that works to improve the sector with training, evaluation, and strategic planning efforts. The 156-page October 1999 issue of *Apertura* was in Spanish and English and contained sections on companies with foundations, legal and ethical issues affecting the nonprofit sector, fundraising, profiles of pioneers in the sector, such as Conciencia, and numerous case studies of nonprofits, such as FARN, the Solidarity Network, and Fundación Cruzada Patagónica. The 204-page 2000 issue focused on the theme of social responsibility in the business sector and featured a guide to corporate giving programs, business involvement in the schools, and *La Nación's* solidarity classified ads, as well as articles on nonprofit books, courses, and tax laws.

There probably are more business magazines in the United States than in Argentina, but I don't know of a single one that devotes an entire issue each year to the nonprofit sector. And, though publications such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy, Nonprofit World,* and *Foundation News and Commentary* all are exemplary newspapers and magazines on the nonprofit sector in the United States, the Argentine publications described above are a degree wider in their scope of coverage. *Foundation News* focuses exclusively on grantmaking foundations, and *Nonprofit World* focuses more on the nonprofits themselves. *The Chronicle* has the widest lens but still emphasizes the philanthropic side of the sector. All are written for professionals and volunteers in the field, while *Tercer Sector* also is written for the general public and assumes a more public role in encouraging citizen involvement, sponsoring public forums, making copies available for sale on newsstands, and acting in partnerships with *La Nación* newspaper and the Foro del Sector Social. This would be akin to one of the U.S. publications selling on newsstands and partnering with *The Washington Post*, Independent Sector, and the National Council of Nonprofit Associations. Finally, all U.S. publications focus almost exclusively on the United States, while *Tercer Sector* may look at citizen organizations in Ireland, Spain, or the U.S. in any given issue.[14]

***An Argentine in front of the offices of the nonprofit Fundación Cruzada Patagónica in Junín de los Andes***


*Jane Kendall*

## Efforts by Argentine Governments To Encourage Citizen Participation

Because citizens are disillusioned with government and political parties, they have turned much of their energy to participation through nonprofits, but many local and regional governments are experimenting with citizen participation efforts too. One of the leaders among local governments is the City of Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina with a population of 1.2 million. It is an auto manufacturing center, a university town, and the historical center of resistance to rule from Buenos Aires.

### *Government Partnerships with Nonprofits in Córdoba*

#### La Casa del Tercer Sector (The House of the Third Sector)

In 2000, Mayor German Kammerath of Córdoba decided to ask nonprofits to help the city work on alleviating poverty. After an "open call" to all NGOs, the mayor appointed 70 NGO representatives to a Solidarity Council. He appointed Hector Morcillo, a trade union leader from the food sector, as President of the Council. The Council of NGOs then initiated four programs: (1) a human development program, which cares for 3,500 children in kindergarten while their mothers work; (2) eight day care homes for 2,500 elderly people; (3) Habitat Popular, a housing project designed to lessen the need for misery villages; and (4) a Social Promotion Office to measure the impact of the nonprofit programs and monitor their progress.

Later that year, the mayor found an abandoned house on a corner full of weeds and decided to create La Casa del Tercer Sector (The House of the Third Sector), which opened in August 2000. Inside, there are large and small meeting rooms, telephones, and computers for free use. Workshops are held on Thursday and Friday on fundraising, use of computers, and forming and dealing with nonprofit boards of directors. The house is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with workshops usually held in the afternoons, and volunteers working there in the afternoons and on Saturdays. On Saturdays, the house becomes a meeting space for Boy Scouts, church groups, and other nonprofits that do not have their own meeting space.

Part of the idea for this house is to increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector, what Solidarity Council member Alberto Tandor calls their "capacitation," or training program. This program helps NGOs define their mission, decide what type of services to provide, and develop a vision of the future in a three-year strategic plan. The NGOs develop marketing and fundraising plans, of which at least 33 percent must come from the nonprofit itself, says Tandor. The NGO also has to promote the use of volunteers and have a plan of evaluation for projects. The visual symbol for the house is a picture of two hands cupped together with a bright light shining from within. The slogan reads, "We help those who help [the nonprofits]."

Solidarity Council member Silvina Brussino says there are 520 nonprofits in Córdoba province, 133 of which work on poverty. The Council produced a directory of these nonprofits and is encouraging increased professionalization of NGOs and increased volunteerism. Brussino says they also have mapped poverty in the city and found 169,502 people with "unsatisfied basic necessities."

#### The Bank of Social Projects

The mayor and Solidarity Council next initiated what they call a "Bank of Social Projects." Again in an open call to the community, the city invited any organization to present social projects that needed to be done in the community, and 83 institutions presented 127 projects for consideration, says Council President Morcillo. The conditions are that the NGOs have to account for the funds, 70 percent of the funds have to be spent on services, and 30 percent can be spent on administration or training—a fairly high level as government requirements go, but a level which reflects the city's commitment to increasing the capacity of the nonprofits to serve. The city then appropriated $1.5 million to the Council for allocation through the Bank of Social Projects.

#### Polling the Public To Decide Budget and Policy Priorities

These partnerships between the city and nonprofits of the House of the Third Sector, the Solidarity Council, and the Bank represent citizen participation in themselves, but the city has widened the net of participation to the public at large through the use of polls of the public. When each

citizen receives his tax form, at the bottom are three to five questions about possible themes the Bank of Social Projects is considering funding in that cycle. The citizen turns in his responses with the tax form. In the United States, one might see "needs assessments" of business and nonprofit leaders conducted by local United Ways or opinion polls conducted by candidates running for office. Córdoba's innovation is to ask citizens their opinions on problems that need attention in their city and then have the Solidarity Council use the answers in allocating funds to address those needs. And, in terms of enlarging the "public" in public participation, Rodrigo Agrelo, a deputy and Vice President of the Córdoba Province House of Representatives, says, "Poor people give more importance to the poll and answer it more often."

In the latest poll, the possible projects were categorized into six themes—infants and child development, street children, addictions, family violence, gender problems, and poverty and environment. Citizens were asked to choose the category they'd recommend for funding by the Bank of Social Projects. Respondents were allowed to focus on one area or prioritize their top three. This question results in a ranking of social needs and funding priorities for the Solidarity Council. In earlier polls, the council found that the categories needed to be simple and easy to understand, finding that terms like "social action" or "social capital" confused the public. Another poll question asks the citizens to evaluate the quality of services on a scale of one to ten.

Agrelo next wants to establish a Bank of Solidarity Hours, where citizens can donate hours of time volunteering on various social projects. Thus, there would be one place to go to volunteer, and NGOs could go to the bank and say, "We need two people for two hours to accompany these grandfathers and grandmothers to the grocery store or pharmacy." "It is a way to grow the social capital," he says. Agrelo and Sofanor Novillo Corvalán, who also is a provincial legislator, want to create a School of Volunteers to train people in volunteerism.

### The Solidarity Action Fund

In addition to the Bank of Social Projects, the city has established a Solidarity Action Fund, funded through deductions from the salaries of legislators and municipal employees. With this additional fund of $1.8 million, the city will support "community institutions that have a strong impact," says Agrelo, such as nonprofits, civil associations in health and autism, or libraries. "We are convinced that the state alone has been inefficient. NGOs are more efficient in solving problems," he says.

### Neighborhood Councils

Finally, the City of Córdoba has established Neighborhood Councils to encourage citizen participation. These councils make recommendations on priorities for infrastructure projects in their neighborhoods. The mayor has announced that part of the city's budget will be allocated to these

***Rodrigo Agrelo, left, a deputy and Vice President of the Córdoba Province House of Representatives, with members of the city's Solidarity Council at La Casa del Tercer Sector and author Ran Coble***

Neighborhood Councils for their infrastructure needs. Thus, the local government is giving citizens at least seven ways to participate—through Children's Councils, the Casa del Tercer Sector, the Solidarity Council, the Bank of Social Projects, polls on allocations of bank funds, the Solidarity Action Fund, and the Neighborhood Councils. It is a serious effort by local government at citizen involvement.

### Involving Nonprofits in Government Inspections

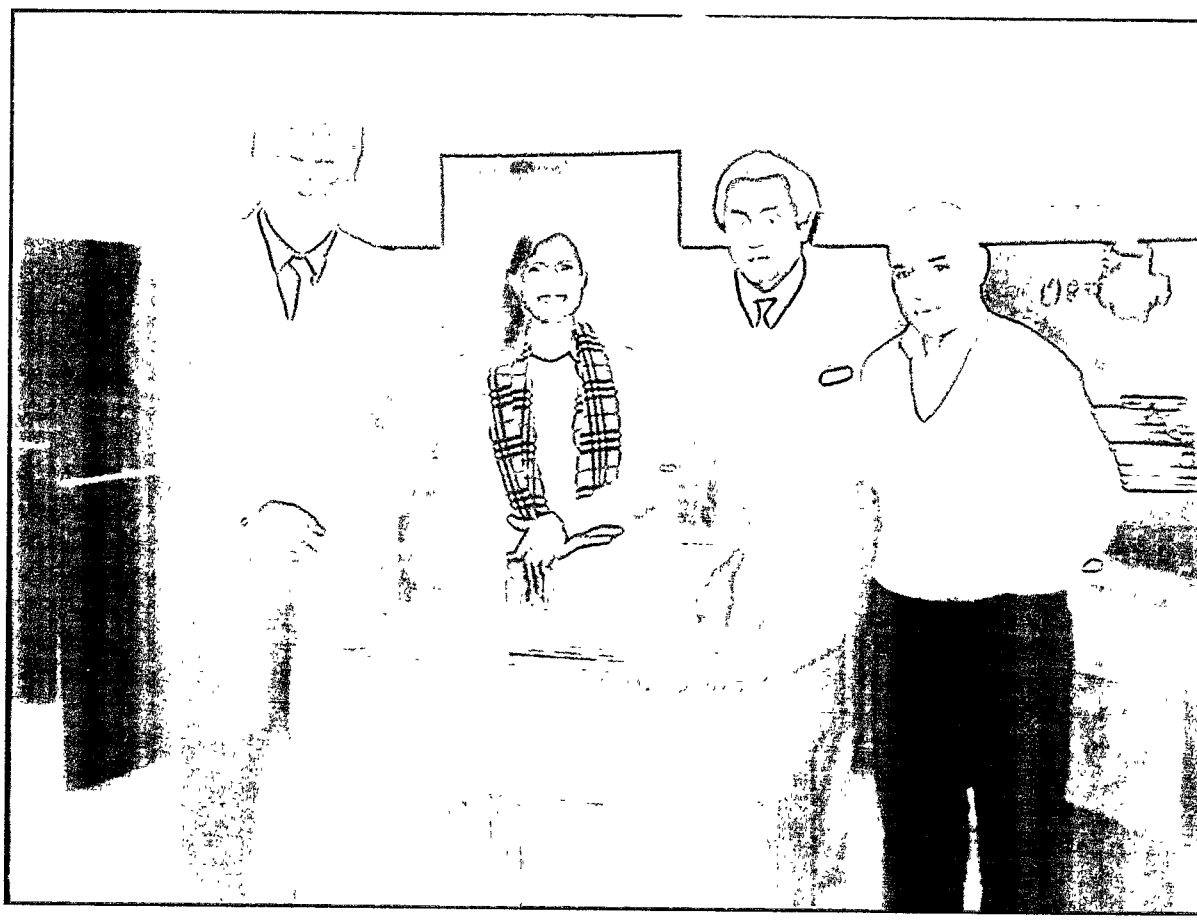
In Argentina, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are included in the government's inspections of industrial facilities for compliance with environmental regulations. To prevent corruption between inspection officials and regulated industries, the government has created a policy of inviting an NGO representative to participate as an observer during inspections.

Using a list of interested NGOs, the agency notifies one NGO at least one day in advance of an intended inspection. To ensure that the regulated industry does not have advance warning of an inspection, the NGO is informed only that an inspection will occur. It doesn't receive the name and address of the facility until the inspection team is on its way to the facility. During the inspection, the NGO can observe, but it is not directly involved in any questioning or sampling.[15] Still, this is a good tool for involving citizens in government inspections and reducing citizen suspicion of government corruption.

### The 25th Chair in Mar del Plata

Symbols are important in encouraging citizen participation, and the coastal city of Mar del Plata has initiated a great symbol for welcoming citizen participation. In this beach resort town of about 600,000 residents, the city council has 24 members. But when you go to a council meeting, there is a 25th chair reserved for the Citizen of the Day. This person has a seat at the table with other council members and can participate in discussions and

***Council Members around the 25th Chair in Mar Del Plata Council Chambers***



*Jane Kendall*

bring new issues before the council. Any resident of the city can sign up to be the Citizen of the Day and sit in that 25th chair, and there is usually a waiting list of 30 to 40 at a time. Individuals sign up, as do NGO spokespersons, neighborhood groups, researchers, and others. One person came and asked for a spinal transplant. Another time, an expert in historic preservation came and talked about accepting a certain building in an historic area. "In every public session of the council, we have the 25th chair," says Council President Roberto Oscar Pagni.

Like Córdoba's mayor and city council, the four Mar del Plata council members I talked with were dissatisfied with current mechanisms of citizen participation and searching for new channels, as Councilman Ernesto Argüeso puts it. Councilwoman Graciela Liana Aronovich adds that the council has even conducted a poll of citizens on whether they would support raising taxes by 3 pesos to create funds for public works projects. In Brazil, she says, citizens participate in the preparation of city budgets and help establish priorities [and see the sections on Córdoba above and Las Condes, Chile below].

Council President Pagni also notes that the council has established a Website for the council as a whole and that each council member is accessible by email. On the council's Website are notices of meetings, contracts to be let, information on the city's finances, and links to the provincial and national government Websites.

Argentine culture is an important factor in citizen participation, say these council members. Councilman Eduardo Romanin says there is a high desire for citizen participation in Argentina. "The Argentine people like to be protagonists, to be the center of attention," he says. As he talks, a demonstration of hundreds of university students marches down the street on a Friday evening, with cheers, speeches, percussion, and music in a demonstration against rising tuition and fees at what once were free public universities.

Council President Pagni adds, "In Argentina, we have 38 million [the population of the country] Presidents, 38 million technical football [soccer] directors, and 38 million cooks. It is our national sport to give opinions. We find it hard to *do* things." Pagni notes that the act of voting itself is citizen participation, since each member of the council had to get about 25,000 to 30,000 votes every two years to win a seat on the council. "People say it's just a formality to vote, but 30,000 people had to act, so I don't think this is a formality. It is a profound act," he says.

At this level, the council members know encouraging citizen participation is not easy. One important factor is transparency, says Aronovich. Another is that citizens have to see some successes result from their participation. They have to believe "their lives will be changed in some meaningful way," says Argüeso. Romanin adds, "If you ring the bell and you obtain something, you are satisfied. But if you ring the bell and nothing happens, you stop ringing the bell and look for another way."

## Civic Education: Exemplary Efforts in Argentina

*"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be . . . I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."*

—*THOMAS JEFFERSON*

### *What Is Civic Education?*

One way citizens become involved and engaged is through civic education. This is particularly important for youth because, to a large extent, citizen involvement is a habit that you develop when you are young.

Civic education in a democracy means different things to different people. For some in the U.S., it means gaining basic *knowledge* of democratic systems of government, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, separation of powers between branches of government, and division of responsibilities between different levels of government. For others, it means inculcating youth with *values*, ethics, attitudes, and character traits essential to a democracy, such as honesty, integrity, kindness, responsibility, and respect. Still others view civic education as development of a set of *skills* citizens need in working together and solving civic problems, such as

public speaking, listening, negotiating, resolving conflict, policy research, and planning. Finally, some see civic education as actual *practice* in the duties of citizenship, such as voting, answering the census, serving on juries, giving to charity, volunteering, writing elected officials, or even running for office. And of course there are those who see civic education as all of the above, such as the N.C. Civic Education Consortium at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Government.

In 2001, the North Carolina General Assembly considered this issue, and enacted a law called the Student Citizenship Act. The legislature encouraged the State Board of Education to include the following in all high schools' civic and citizenship education curricula:

"a. That students write to a local, State, or federal elected official about an issue that is important to them;
b. Instruction on the importance of voting and otherwise participating in the democratic process;
c. Information about current events and governmental structure; and
d. Information about the democratic process and how laws are made."[16]

At the international level, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement evaluated 90,000 14-year-olds in 28 countries on their civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes. The Netherlands-based organization measured:

"■ students' knowledge of democratic principles;
■ their skills in interpreting political communication, such as campaign leaflets and political cartoons;
■ their concepts of democracy and citizenship;
■ their attitudes related to trust in institutions, the nation's opportunities for immigrants, and women's political rights; and
■ their expected participation in civic-related activities."[17]

The United States ranked only sixth among the 28 nations studied. The new democracy of Poland ranked first, and other new democracies such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia also were among the top ten. The only two South American countries studied, Chile and Colombia, finished in the bottom two spots.

Over the last 20 years, the educational system in the United States has focused on increasing

***A normal day of demonstrations in the streets near the Pink House and offices of the Argentine President***

*Ran Coble*

accountability on educational achievement. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education said there was "a rising tide of mediocrity" in American schools and that our children were falling behind their peers in other developed nations and would not be prepared to lead the U.S. economy or government in the years ahead.[18] This report sparked educational reform efforts in virtually every state, with increased testing of students and renewed emphasis being given to reading, writing, math, and science. The unintended consequence has been that civic education has suffered. It is not considered vital to a child's success in work or in higher education, though it is vital to the success of democracy.

In addition, I believe that one of the United States' great weaknesses is the inability of our people to conceive how people in another country might view our actions or motives. What is exemplary about much of Argentina's work in civic education is the recurrent theme of learning how to see public issues and the world through others' eyes. The other recurring theme is the value for service to others and sense of solidarity that pervades the Argentine civic education programs. You may find examples of similar programs in the United States, but they do not always receive the commitment of time and resources that they need to succeed. The range of the efforts in Argentina is impressive, and the commitment of the people is strong. This bodes well for Argentina's civic future.

## Exemplary Programs in Civic Education in Argentina

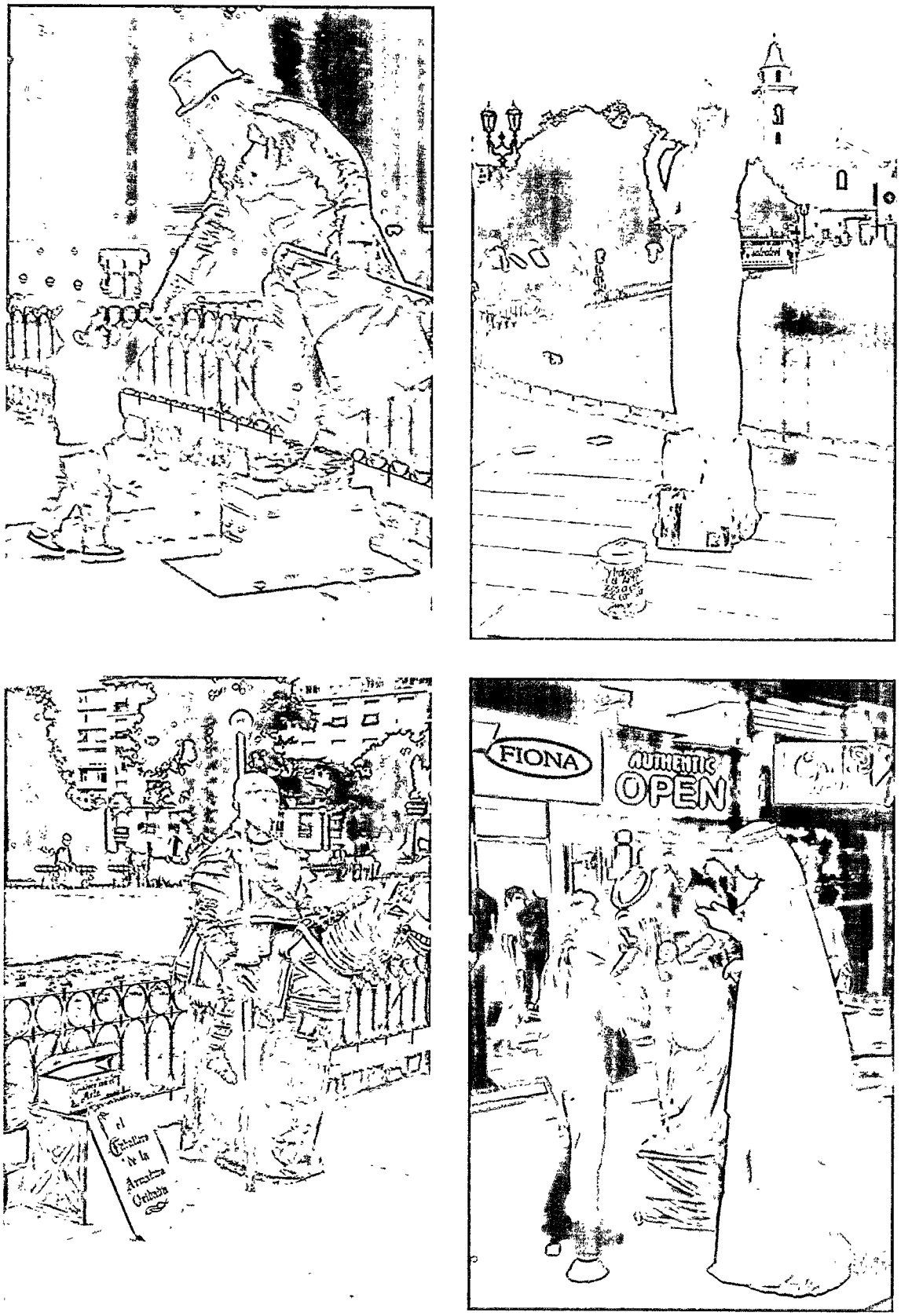
### *Conciencia's Programs in Schools, Educating Students in Values, the Model UN, Federalism, and Public Budgets*

In addition to the Project Citizen program designed to foster citizen participation among youth (see page 66 above), Conciencia also offers five exemplary civic education programs. The students in these programs consistently learn to see public issues through the eyes of others—whether through the eyes of someone from another economic background, in another school, with different values, in another country, or at another level of government.

*The Schools Program*—In its Programa Colegios, or Schools Program, Conciencia chooses five public schools and five private schools, and two teachers, two students, and one parent in each school to discuss the subject of leadership in a democracy. Conciencia's first vice-president, Dora Larese Roja de Scacciati, says, "The public schools in Argentina are very, very poor, and they lack everything. On the other side, many of the private schools are very rich, and they have every single element they need." "But," she continues, "the students of the public schools have more experience in life than the pupils from the private schools, so it was a very good exchange. Suddenly, the students from the private schools learned how you can live with this amount of money, with no television, with no computers, with no cellular [phones]. Generally, the private schools were the hosts . . . so the students of the public schools could see what existed. . . . They learned what they could achieve if they decided to study and go on the side of education."

*Educating Students in Values*—From this beginning, Conciencia started a program called Educating Students in Values because, Scacciati says, "Everybody began to be very sure of what democracy was. If you ask the students at the schools what democracy is, they would be able to recite some wonderful paragraph from the constitution. But seeing how they acted, you realized they knew very little about conduct, about how to behave in a democracy—that democracy was not only a word and was not only free elections. And so we decided that what we need is ways of being, values, attitudes." Scacciati adds, "It was so hard to go through [Argentina's] different military processes, then when the military processes end, the population decides they only have rights, and it's very difficult to make them understand they also have responsibilities. Because it's like a pendulum, you know, they decide, 'No, now it's my turn,' and it takes a very long time to come back. So we decided to push this pendulum a bit through a different program."

*The Model United Nations Assembly Program*—From here, Conciencia began to institute interactive programs to counter what Scacciati says is an authoritarian streak in the Argentine people. "And this, you can see a lot with the teachers. The teachers want their pupils to believe in what they believe," she says. Conciencia's Model United Nations Program helps students "discover they can think by themselves. They discover they




Jane Kendall

***Living statues that move for money in the streets of Buenos Aries***

can speak by themselves. They can say what they want to say."

In the UN Program, each school learns about the history, culture, values, and views of another country—not of Argentina—and learns to represent and defend the point of view of that other country on such issues as immigration, the environment, or women's rights.

Scacciati says, "The result sought, aside from turning them [the students] into good citizens and future political leaders, is that they enter the globalized world. All this yields results, because one day in the future their country will benefit from it."[19]

At this point, two students who volunteer at Conciencia enter the room, and I ask Mauricio, 20, what the Model UN Program meant to him. "Everything," he replies. He goes on to explain how one year he represented France with its liberal view of women's rights, and in the next model, represented Iran with its more conservative view. "I have a new vision of what the world is and what the world means," he says.

In a national competition last year, 15,000 high school students participated in Conciencia's UN program. The winning school was a Jewish school that represented Libya. After the events of September 11, 2001, I believe this kind of civic education is going to be increasingly important in helping all of us see and understand things from the perspective of other countries and other cultures.

*The Federalism Program*—In Conciencia's Federalism Program, university students represent different provinces instead of different countries. Instead of role-playing as ambassadors, they act as provincial governors. Argentina is almost as long as the United States is wide, and the difference between the poor regions of the northwest and the wealthy areas of Olivos outside Buenos Aires or Bariloche in the south is wide—akin to contrasting Mississippi and California in the United States. In this program, the students debate issues affecting the whole country, such as economic development or education, but from the perspective of a province not their own.

Until recently, North Carolina had a Youth Legislative Assembly program like this, but students represented their home county among the state's 100 counties. This may have helped make our students prouder of their roots and stronger advocates for their region, but the Argentine process helps students see issues from another region's perspective. The North Carolina program fell victim to budget cuts brought on by the state's fiscal difficulties, though some individual schools operate programs on their own.

*The Public Budget Program*—In Conciencia's Public Budget Program, students learn "how to get involved in the public budget," says Andrea, the other Conciencia student volunteer. Participants choose among different projects in education, Social Security, health, or economic development, and evaluate public expenditures in those areas. They go to the legislature and "spend time trying to find out what they do with the money."

"Our basic and fundamental idea is to create a good citizen who will behave as such. That is what is missing in our country," says Scacciati. "That is why our programs focus more on people acquiring skills than on the actual subject of the programs. . . ."[20]

## *The Ministry of Education's Program of Civic Education*

During the years of rule by the military, the name of the subject of civic education in schools was changed to Moral and Civic Education, with an emphasis on traditional family values and support for institutions like the military and Catholic Church. "I was a civic education teacher then, but I was teaching science fiction," says Nieves Tapia, now general coordinator for the National Program for School and Community in Argentina's Ministry of Education. "I was teaching what it would be like if we had a Congress, an independent judiciary, and free speech."

Today, the Argentine civic education curriculum combines two important elements—an Ethics and Citizen Formation Program and a Service-Learning Program. It is this combination of theory and practice, of reflection and doing, and of values and service to the community that I think is worth learning from.

### The Ministry's Program of Ethics and Citizen Formation

Laura Clérico works in the Ministry's program of Ethics and Citizen Formation. She says the curriculum is designed to present ethical dilemmas and then help the students reflect on the consequences. Formerly, the curriculum simply transmitted what the law said—the military law—and there was no room for students to think. "It was impossible to

teach in a system which doesn't allow alternatives," she says.

Now, it is very important to teach ethics "in dialogue, to recognize the other," she continues. "The school provides a lot of opportunities—for example, when conflict appears on the playground—and we use this as an opportunity to learn."

The ministry's program description says that its goals are to:

- form citizens able to participate in a pluralistic and democratic society;
- form autonomous, critical, and reflective persons able to make their own decisions and able to develop their own life plans;
- promote dialogue, "argumentation," and participation; and
- give students the tools to make their own decisions and to elaborate moral and political judgments.[21] This may include human rights education, environmental education, or consumer education.

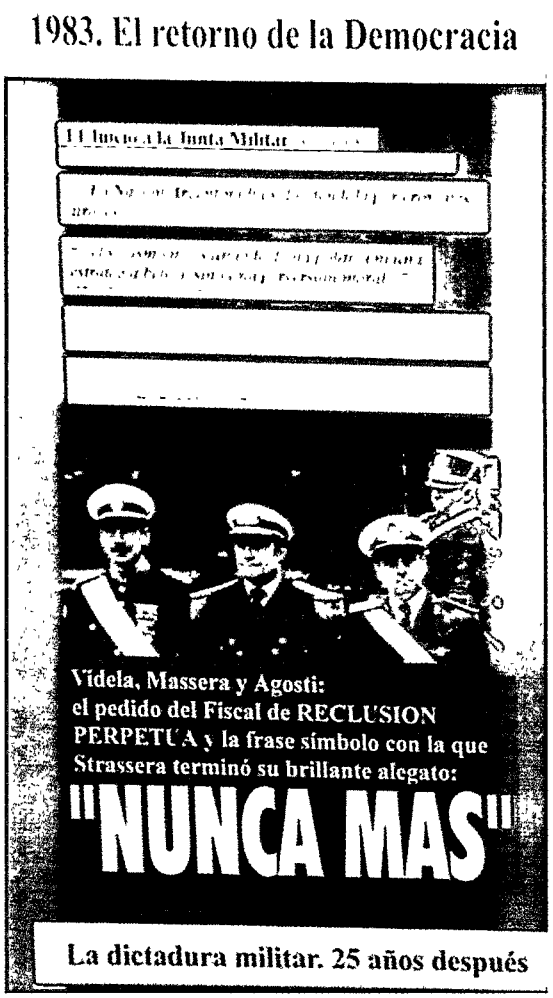
I ask Clérico if there is an event or story that captures the tenor of civic education in Argentina. She thinks a minute and then proposes that we look at what the students produced in an exhibition on human rights held in March 2001. She opens five scrapbooks of posters, poems, photographs, drawings, and song lyrics depicting how the students viewed human rights under "the last military dictatorship." One poster reads, "Censorship was like a wall in our minds" over a picture of bricks in a wall. Another collage asks, "Who were the guilty?" One poem ends with "No Olvidar" (don't forget) in big letters, while another uses native rock singer Charly García's lyrics in "Alice in Wonderland" as a metaphor for Argentina. "Alice comes here and cannot understand the lack of a rational world," explains Clérico. Another more upbeat poem asks, "Why do we sing?" and answers that Argentines sing in relation to their history and to keep the memory alive. "To keep these things in our memory is very important," says Clérico as she gives me a copy of *Nunca Màs* (Never Again), the 1984 report of a national commission which investigated the disappearance of thousands of Argentine citizens during the Dirty War. *Nunca Más* and a picture of the generals is depicted in one student's poster behind her.

**A student poster addresses the return of democracy to Argentina in 1983.**

### The Ministry's School and Community Service-Learning Program

*"Any sports coach will tell you that it is impossible to teach how to play football, baseball, or any game just sitting in a classroom. Even if you teach the rules, the students will not learn how to play. For years, we have been trying to teach young people to be good citizens giving them only the rules to be followed. Asking students to learn by heart the Preamble of our Constitution did not prevent us from having decades of military governments. In giving young students the opportunity to serve their communities in a real, concrete way, we provide them with a unique occasion to be 'in the field' and learn how to do what needs to be done. Thus, we encourage them to act as good citizens now, not only to be 'a promise for the future.'"*[22]

—School and Community Program, Argentina Ministry of Education




Ran Coble

Nieves Tapia, general coordinator for the School and Community Program in Argentina's Ministry of Education, says service-learning helps young people improve their learning and be better persons and active citizens. As defined by the Ministry, "student community service is service-learning only when:

- Activities are planned to provide valuable service and formal learning that can be evaluated;
- Service activities . . . are clearly connected with curriculum contents; and
- Young people provide real answers to real needs—service has been requested by recipients."[23]

The school is one of the most important places to form the habit of citizenship, says Tapia. And, the Argentine public has more confidence in public schools as solvers of social problems than any institution other than the Catholic Church. In a September 1998 Gallup poll, 56 percent of the public expressed "a lot of confidence" or "enough confidence" in the public schools as problem-solvers—ahead of state universities, the army, municipalities, small businesses, the federal government, unions, and political parties. Only four groups held the confidence of the majority of a cynical public. By 2001, Gallup Argentina polls showed schools leading (at 63 percent) all other institutions—including the Catholic Church—in the public's confidence in ability to solve social problems.[24]

At least one-tenth of Argentina's 37,000 schools have service-learning programs. In 2000, the country began giving a Presidential Award to honor schools for actual work done in the community, and 3,003 schools nominated Solidarity Projects for the award. The three first-prize winners receive $5,000 each, a computer for the school, and training scholarships for teachers and students. Seven schools receive honorable mention awards of $2,000, a computer, and scholarships.

One of the prize winners was in a small town in Santa Fe province called Ramona, where eighth graders in a chemistry class saw a video about water pollution and decided to test their city's water supply to find out what chemicals were in its water. To their surprise, they found arsenic. They decided to go tell the city council and found out that the council had known about the problem for 10 years but hadn't done anything because they didn't want to raise taxes. So the students went public with the news and started advocating for clean water. By the time the students were in the 12th grade, the city council had built a new water system. And, together with a local hospital and two national universities, the council organized a health prevention plan and a treatment program for people with arsenic poisoning.

*Ran Coble*

***Nieves Tapia, front, at the Ministry of Education***

Another prize went to a group of five-year-olds in a kindergarten in Neuquén. The children were worried about the lack of trees in the arid area and decided that each time a baby was born in the local hospital, they would give the family a tree to plant in the family's garden. When former President Fernando de la Rua, a grandfather himself, presented the award to the kindergarten, two little girls gave him a tree to plant too.

The discussion of Red Solidaria above (see pages 70–74) shows how important the concept of solidarity is to Argentines' success in citizen involvement efforts. But it is also important in their

service-learning efforts. Magdalena Lanús, who works in service-learning training in the Ministry says, "Solidarity is a very big value, it is a way of working with others." She says they work with 588 NGOs but won't work with just any NGO. The NGO has to be transparent to the public and respect the school. Solidarity is not charity, she says. For example, a food bank that only gives away food and doesn't develop a long-term relationship would not qualify to work with the program. Nor would an NGO that appears briefly in a community. "It is not a one-time relationship," she says. "It's a way of facing life." In launching the national awards, President de la Rua said, "Teaching the principles of solidarity is an essential component of education."

This cultural value for solidarity among the Argentine people is a contrast with values sometimes expressed in schools in the United States, such as multiculturism. The late Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, says multiculturism is dangerous for a democratic multi-ethnic society because it encourages people "to think of themselves not as individuals, but primarily in terms of their membership in groups." By focusing on differences instead of common ground, Shanker said, this kind of education does not increase tolerance; instead, it feeds racial and ethnic tensions and erodes civil society, which requires a sense of the common good, a recognition that we are all members of the human race.[25]

* * *

Bariloche is 1,000 miles southwest of Buenos Aires, a beautiful town with a lake in front and mountains that rise behind. Its ski resorts, alpine chalets, and chocolate shops give it the feel of Switzerland, but it is also home to two exemplary service-learning projects—one at a school for well-to-do students and the other at a very poor school.

Woodville School is located on the slope of Mount Otto and has about 520 students of mostly middle and upper class origins, from kindergarten through high school. It is a bilingual school teaching Spanish and English. In a resort community with many foreign visitors, it is noteworthy that the school offers its knowledge of English as a resource to the community (called English for Everyone) through teaching, translations, and training.

I visited the school, however, because of its work in sponsoring community forums on a variety of issues. In 1999 and 2000, Woodville School hosted forums on drugs and addictions and encouraged the different generations to talk in an atmosphere of openness and honesty. "When the kids are talking about themselves or their friends using drugs, what they're living through, well, you get it in the raw," says Edward Shaw, a naturalist, biologist, and teacher at Woodville. "But I never cease to be amazed at the capacity of adolescents to identify issues, speak eloquently, and come up with solutions. We underestimate the role of children." In June 2001, I attended a forum with about 70 people who gave up a Saturday to discuss issues in sustainable development, an important issue in a resort town about to be overwhelmed by tourist industry growth. Clearly relishing the dialogue, Shaw says, "You know the saying, wherever there are two Argentines, there are three opinions."

*Jane Kendall*

***Woodville School headmaster Stephen Cohen***

School headmaster Stephen Cohen sees the forums as vehicles for citizen participation. Argentines had been afraid to participate in the 1970s, but the return to democracy "opened the floodgates," he says. Now there is a lot bubbling up beneath the surface, and he wants to use the forums as a way to connect the school to the community and to talk about local problems. The next forum topic is tourism, where they hope to link students with economic developers, travel agents, waiters in restaurants, and hotel workers.

High above downtown Bariloche are misery villages in a very poor barrio. The roads are rutted and unpaved, the houses have tin roofs or siding,

and the few cars look like they might have made their last run. Eight or nine people might live in one house, and young girls have children as early as age 13 or 14. In this setting sits one of the Presidential Service-Learning Award-winning schools, Taller de Capacitación Integral Enrique Angelleli.

"The view of this area in town was that it was an area of drugs and robbery. There was a culture of begging, and this is not good for a person," says Gustavo Gennuso, director of the school. So in 1996, Gennuso and a group of students discussed the problems facing the area and whether they had anything to contribute to others. They decided that even though they were poor, they still had something to give. So they voted on who they wanted to help and decided on the old people—"the ancients" as they call them.

At first, the old people were suspicious of the youths—thinking they wanted to rob them. But gradually the youths gained their trust by fixing holes in the roofs, repairing broken windows, splitting wood for fires, and running errands to the grocery store. The youth made visits and "took data on which houses didn't have windows with glass and where there was a hole in the roof," says Gennuso. "Our work is to educate, so this is important. They ask the ancients what they needed, and the ancient gets to speak."

*"No one is so rich that he does not need another's help, no one so poor as not to be useful in some way to his fellow man."*

—POPE LEO XIII

They made decisions on what to do. The male carpentry students repaired the roofs and floors and made beds, tables, and furniture. The female students repaired ancients' clothes. The social sciences students surveyed who was eligible for government pensions. The language students taught elders how to write government agencies or the electric power company. Now the relationship is so close that the ancients call themselves the grandparents of these kids.

When the school won the national second prize, three students and two teachers flew to the capital for the ceremony. It was the students' first flight ever. One of the students, 18-year-old Ana Pereira, said, "Before, I couldn't speak. My mama would send me to borrow a cup of sugar, and I would take half an hour to gather my strength and knock on the door of my neighbor. Now I am going to the Municipality to ask for electric light for

***A public forum at Woodville***

*Jane Kendall*

Jane Kendall

***Children at Angelleli school in Bariloche***

the grandparents." When Pereira and the others finished their presentation before a crowd of 400 in Buenos Aires, the students who won third prize voted to give their $5,000 in prize money to the Angelleli school. The first prize winners said they were too moved by the presentation of the impoverished students to speak. When the students returned to Bariloche, the ancients and other students met them cheering at the airport. "This prize was very good," says Gennuso, "because now the other students want to participate."

Some of the ancients since have died, and this is hard for the children, he says, because there is no public funeral service and no money for plots in a cemetery. So the youth have decided they want to write a history of the ancients to make the point that even the life of an ancient in this poor place has value. The students also dream of building a garden and a Day House for the Grandparents where they can come three to five hours a day and be with the children.

The slogan for the Angelleli project is, "No one is so poor that he doesn't have anything to give." Or in Ana Pereira's words, "At first, the grandparents would hardly open their doors to us. After a year, they permitted us to enter and fed us mate.[26] If you ask them now, they will tell you that I am one granddaughter more."[27]

* * *

On the eastern side of Argentina, opposite Bariloche but still 600 miles south of Buenos Aires, lies the river city of Viedma, site of another service-learning success. Ethel di Leo, a history teacher, began the school year with a group of students who were repeating the course for the second or third time. The students were aggressive, and police had been called several times. The students viewed themselves as "not having the brains" to do the work and envisioned their futures as domestic servants or loading bags of onions at local farms. Discussing Christopher Columbus or the Renaissance in a history class was a waste of time.[28]

However, di Leo picked up on student comments that "while we are here at school, there are kids in the neighborhood that go hungry." She suggested they present a project to set up a bakery in the neighboring primary school, which many of them had attended, so that children there would

have something to eat. After some debate, the students decided to request funds and began to hold meetings to choose a name ("Youth in Progress"), design a logo, and organize a search for donations.

With the help of their teachers, the students wrote up the project description, objectives, schedule, and even a budget that included computations of the value-added tax. They also decided on work criteria, including a requirement that missing more than one meeting would exclude the absentee from the project.

The enthusiasm for the project carried over into the classroom, and the history course now includes a section called "Getting To Know Our Province" of Río Negro. As with the bakery project, the students wrote up a statement of objectives, conducted interviews, and drew up an itinerary which concluded with a visit to the Valley of the Río Negro (Black River).

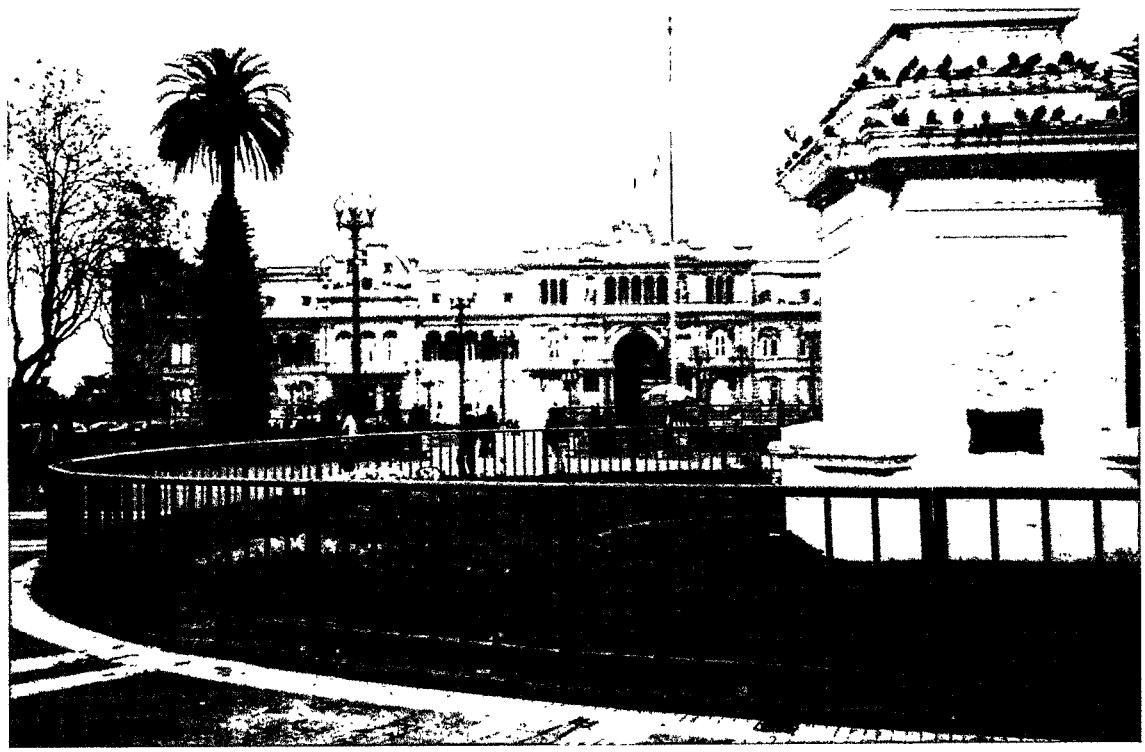
By the end of the school year, the violence and misconduct had disappeared, but funds for the bakery had not appeared. Still, the students helped one another study for exams, and all but one made it into the next grade.

Then they were notified that funds had been earmarked for their project in a competition with other projects from the entire country. The $4,800 award was used to buy bakery equipment. One student received training to become a baker, and others helped organize and manage the bakery. The Solidarity Bakery opened on November 26, 1998, and the children at the primary school now can take home bread every day for their own families or exchange it for flour with other deprived families. The group of students who had been dangerously close to appearing in the "crimes" section of the newspaper instead were featured as donors of bread at their new bakery. As the Ministry of Education write-up puts it, "Service learning can turn out to be an exceptional opportunity to experience one's own capacity to transform reality."[29]

* * *

I think service learning is the link between civic education and citizen participation. It solves three important problems in turning the young into good citizens: (1) it helps develop good civic habits while students are young; (2) it helps students see that they can make a difference in the world; and (3) it helps students make the connection between private experience and public policy and gets them involved in the public sphere. The combination of *learning* and *serving* is a great example of civic education that prepares youth for a lifetime of active citizenship.

***The Pink House Presidential Palace is the site of many civic demonstrations.***



*Ran Coble*

# Efforts in Citizen Participation and Civic Education by Chile's Nonprofits and NGO Sector

*"It is a territory so small that on the map it ends up seeming like a beach between cordillera and sea, a parenthesis of space whimsically situated between two centaur-like powers. . . ."*

*"The land is reduced, inferior to the spirit of its people."*

*"Praised be the national spirit that allows cooperation in our sacred task of forming the eternal vertebrae of a nation, without hate. . . ."*

—FROM "CHILE" BY GABRIELA MISTRAL[30]

## PARTICIPA (Participation)

It seems fitting that a description of efforts in citizen participation and civic education in Chile should begin with the group called Participa. The group's history also illustrates how successful citizen participation and civic education efforts change with the needs of the people. Participa's efforts began with the 1988 plebiscite on whether to grant General Augusto Pinochet another eight years in power. Participa's executive director, Monica Jiménez, served as a member of the Committee for Free and Fair Elections, whose task was "to develop confidence in the people in their power." At the beginning of the campaign, only 3 million people were registered to vote. After the committee recruited 7,000 volunteers and worked in 168 municipalities in Chile, 8 million registered to vote, and on October 5, 1988, a 54 percent majority voted "No" to Pinochet, thereby putting Chile on the path back to democracy.

After this, Jiménez thought she would return to her job as dean of the school of social work at Catholic University, but she saw that people were afraid because Pinochet still was head of the Army. So she remained at Participa and began organizing public forums across the country in advance of the Presidential and Congressional elections. Using the biggest theater in each town, Participa organized public forums with candidates from all political parties. They developed materials to explain what democracy is, the duties and rights of citizens in a democracy, and the difference between authoritarian and democratic governments. "We don't use this as much today," she says. "It's so basic."

When newly elected President Patricio Aylwin took office in March 1990, he asked Jiménez to serve on the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, and that occupied her for a year. Then Participa began working with teachers of history and civics to produce a textbook on civic education. They produced a television program aired on Saturdays and Sundays called "How To Live in a Democracy." And, they began directing their efforts toward groups with lower levels of civic involvement, targeting youth and women in particular.

Participa next initiated an effort to help get women into politics with a School for Women's Leadership. They invited all the political parties to send their best women. With youth, they recognized that young people like to play games, so they developed Monopoly-style board games. One game teaches about the three branches of government. In another, the players decide on a public issue to discuss beforehand—for example, drug policy. Then a player rolls the dice, moves three spaces, and may land on a picture of a policeman. "What would the policeman think about drug policy?" the other players ask. Then someone else rolls the dice, moves five spaces, and lands on a picture of a coca farmer. "What would the coca farmer think about drug policy?" The game is a wonderful way to talk about public issues and to help youth develop an appreciation for the viewpoints of others, a key part of civic education and a key skill in a democracy.

As a decade of restored democracy came to an end, Jiménez says the people at Participa noticed a change in citizen behavior and attitudes. "They don't like to participate in politics any more," she says. "They prefer to participate in organizations that are closer to their families and organizations that resolve some problem they have." For example, the citizens have moved to participation in religious, environmental, and human rights organizations. "They don't realize that this is politics too," she laughs.

Participa now is working on three new projects to meet the citizens where they are. The first project recognizes that the federal government is now more receptive to citizen participation and has rules to encourage participation in such areas as the environment. So Participa has developed a manual for citizen participation. They invite all the actors on a public issue to general meetings, which draw 100 to 250 people, says Jiménez. The question might be the garbage of the city, and the participants may include the political authorities, the neighborhood, environmentalists, the garbage collectors, and the owners of the trucks that collect the garbage. Sometimes in groups with like interests, sometimes in mixed groups, the people talk for two days and try to reach consensus on what to do.

A second project, "Aprender" (To Learn), is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Santiago. Aprender has collaborated with a home-builder and local entrepreneur to build a new high school and works with students from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., as well as with parents and adults in the afternoons and on Saturdays.

***Participa's executive director, Monica Jiménez***


*Ran Coble*

In a third project, The University Builds the Country, Participa is working to expand the concept of social responsibility in Chile's universities. Jiménez says this project came about when she noticed that as the universities began to receive less government money, many of the teachers and students were forgetting their social responsibilities. "Because they're not receiving their education free anymore, they believe they don't have any responsibility to society," she says. "But people who receive more should give more," she says, alluding to the Bibical parable of the talents. She meets with university leaders and students in Santiago and Temuco in the south and asks them what the universities can do for the country in five areas—the social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Universities in North Carolina and the United States could learn much from this call to public service.

Participa's slogans for its various programs—"You Can Build The Country," "You Can Change the Society"—are designed to use language to build realities, says Jiménez. "Anything you dream or verbalize, you can do," she says. Its logo of people joining hands in an arc around a yellow globe or sun represents the idea that when citizens join together, "one by one, people start believing they can make the difference."

### Hogar de Cristo (Home of Christ)

Chile is a heavily Catholic country (77 percent), so it is natural to look for examples of citizen participation in the religious part of its nonprofit sector as well. Hogar de Cristo (Home of Christ) was founded in 1944 by Padre Alberto Hurtado. Hurtado published a highly controversial book called *Is Chile a Catholic Country?*, which asked how such poverty and educational and health problems could exist in a truly religious country. Hogar de Cristo is an NGO separate from the Catholic Church. Its mission is to serve the poorest of the poor in their own environment. It operates more than 600 centers serving 22,000 people a day throughout Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. Hogar de Cristo has programs in health, housing, and personal assistance (food, medicine, clothes) and provides services to children, orphans, at-risk youth, drug addicts, people with disabilities, and the elderly. It operates mobile health clinics, as well as night shelters for the homeless in Chile. More and more, the organization is conducting research on social problems and trying to influence public policy. It has spun off new NGOs, including the

***Chilean Eisenhower Fellow Cesar Vicuña (left), with Hogar de Cristo's Benito Baranda, Paulo Egenau, and Ran Coble***

Chilean Foundation for the Solution of Poverty, which makes systematic studies of poverty and made proposals to the government in 14 different areas.

Social Director Benito Baranda and Coordinator of the Social Risk Area, Paulo Egenau, say there are three levels of citizen participation in Hogar de Cristo. At the first level, Hogar de Cristo works for "participation by the poor in their own solutions." In a local slum in Santiago, the group works in organizing 1,000–2,000 people, saying, "You have something to say here," and "then they take control," says Egenau. At the second level is public involvement, such as the donations of money, the ads donated by a public relations company, and research time contributed by local universities. Though the average gift is only $3–4 a month, public donations total about 55 percent of Hogar de Cristo's $35 million budget. At the third level are the volunteers who give their time and ideas. For example, a doctor donates the first two hours of his work day each Monday to treat the sick, and the idea for the mobile health clinics came from a volunteer.

Volunteer Coordinator Veronica Monroy oversees a network of 5,000 volunteers for Hogar de Cristo in Chile, 2,000 in Santiago alone. Monroy outlines three functions served by the volunteers. First, they do service work, such as helping build small wooden box shelters. Second, volunteers promote the concept of solidarity among the Chilean people—"we're trying to draw out the positive, the integrity, the dignity of people when volunteering." Third, the volunteers are educating the public about what Hogar de Cristo is doing, about the reality of poverty, and about the responsibility of all Chileans to deal with this poverty.

Monroy started as a volunteer herself. After volunteering as a university student, she moved further south in Chile and founded a *filial*, or affiliate, again as a volunteer. She had another job as a social worker but kept volunteering so much that Hogar de Cristo finally asked her to take a full-time position. "I believe in my heart in volunteering—in my heart," she emphasizes. "I saw the immense potential. It makes a great difference in the volunteers' lives too. It has an effect on the people and things that surround that volunteer. We are all stones thrown into the pool of water."[31]

### FORJA (Forge)

Two of the biggest barriers to citizen participation are lack of access to government informa-

tion and citizens' belief that government officials are corrupt and therefore that citizen participation will not make a difference. Chile's Forja, an acronym for Formación Jurídica para la Acción (Legal Formation for Action, with the acronym translating as Forge) is a nonprofit that works to lower both of these barriers.

Forja is the Chilean chapter of Transparency International, which has national chapters in 75 countries around the world, including 14 in Latin America. Poder Ciudadano, for example (discussed above on pages 61–64), is the Argentina chapter. The Chilean group has three areas of action—(1) access to justice, (2) citizen actions for the public interest, and (3) transparency and probity in acting honestly with public funds. Forja's president, Sebastian Cox, defines citizen participation as "the chance to be there and the chance to influence decisions." Thus, the group's program in access to justice is designed to educate citizens about their rights—civil, economic, cultural, and environmental—and not just to know these rights but to exercise them. To this end, they have created what they call "juridical extension committees" in 30 of Chile's 342 municipalities, training 360 local leaders in how to help people exercise their rights. They also are involved in creating civil associations that inform the poor and homeless of their civil rights. One municipality said these associations were illegal but lost the case to Forja. And, the group has a project which advocates for the use of conflict resolution as an alternative to gaining access to Chile's congested courts.

The second area of action for Forja involves citizen actions for the public interest. Here, the group looks for responsibilities of the government under laws that aren't being fulfilled. For example, an appellate court had ordered a cell phone company to stop building antennas near private homes because of the microwave danger to people's health. When the company did not comply, Forja organized 200 people into a neighborhood committee, supplied the lawyers, and helped develop a communications strategy to enforce the court's injunction. Forja and the neighborhood committee also were successful in getting the municipality to enact an ordinance regulating the antennas. In another case, Forja worked with a community to close an unauthorized landfill and look for an alternative site for the garbage.

The third area of action is the best known—that of encouraging openness, or transparency, in government and preventing corruption. Since 1995, Transparency International has published an international Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures perceived levels of corruption among public officials. The index is based on 14 surveys from 10 independent sources (such as the World Bank and PricewaterhouseCoopers) of elected officials, businesspeople, foreign investors, and academics. Typically, those surveyed are asked, "Do you know of any case of corruption?" In the 2001

***Javier, Andrea Fernandez, and Sebastian Cox of Forja, with the author***


*Fernando Rojas*

rankings of 91 countries, Finland and Denmark were ranked as least corrupt, with the United States tied for 16th, Chile close behind and tied for 18th, and Argentina more than halfway down and tied with China at 57th. The most corrupt nations were Bangladesh (the worst), Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia.[32]

In Chile, Forja is working with both the private sector and with government to reduce corruption. Business is seen as a key partner in the fight against public corruption (because bribes and payoffs add to the cost of doing business and undermine the efficacy of legal contracts), so Forja is working with business to adapt Chilean law to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. This convention includes both criminal sanctions and preventive measures, including criminalization of offenses such as illicit enrichment, cooperation among nations on investigations and judicial proceedings, and extradition.

Forja also has worked with business and government to diagnose what it calls "areas at future risk of corruption." It convened a group familiar with 14 areas of government activity and came up with procedures that would prevent the likelihood of corruption when hiring people, purchasing materials, putting government contracts out for bid, and so forth. This is important in countries like Chile and Argentina, where the transition back to democracy from authoritarianism carries opportunities for mischief. As Transparency International's Kamal Hossain says, "Experience shows that there is an increase in opportunities for corruption during the process of transition. Many strategic decisions still need to be taken by the state with regard to the pace of privatization and deregulation. Opportunities to grant favors abound involving grants of licenses, grants of valuable public land and natural resources, and the award of mega-projects to private investors, domestic and foreign, in areas previously reserved to the public sector such as power, telecommunications, transportation, and physical infrastructure. . . . What then emerges is a 'free for all.'"[33]

In the States, our main tools in helping citizens gain access to information are sunshine laws—open meetings and public records laws. Open meetings laws allow citizens to attend meetings by elected officials and other government bodies, while public records laws give citizens the right to copies of government documents, records, and reports. The national Freedom of Information Act is an example of such a law, and almost all 50 states have enacted such laws too. Our only tool in combating perceptions of corruption usually has been criminal prosecution in the courts, so Forja's work in identifying situations of risk and developing preventive measures should be of interest in the U.S.

## Efforts by Chilean Governments To Encourage Citizen Participation

### Efforts at the National Level

The 1999 campaign for Chile's presidency was so close that a runoff was needed to decide the outcome in January 2000 between the eventual winner, Ricardo Lagos, and Joaquín Lavín, now mayor of Santiago. Both Lagos and Lavín are responsible for some exciting developments in citizen participation in Chile.

During the campaign, Lagos made a commitment to work with civil society organizations. After taking office in March 2000, President Lagos appointed a 28-member Citizen Council for the Strengthening of Civil Society. The council met for six months and produced a report in December 2000 with proposals to the president in the following four areas: (1) the legal and regulatory framework for civil society organizations; (2) public and private funding for these institutions; (3) strategies to strengthen and modernize the management of these organizations; and (4) other forms of cooperation between the State and civil society. By May 2001, the president had responded to the proposals with a magnificent 15-page *Plan for Strengthening Civil Society*, one of the best roadmaps for citizen participation and for partnerships between government and nonprofits that I've seen.

The very first sentence of the report reads, "One of the distinctive features we wish to give the Third Government of the *Concertación* (alliance of center and center-left parties) is to achieve greater and better citizen involvement." The report goes on to say, "Our country and our future require there to be a strong relationship and frank dialogue between the State and civil society. . . . Civil society also ensures a balance between citizens' rights and duties, resulting in a sense of reciprocity that makes us feel jointly involved in a common cause. . . . Continual improvement of the work of the State requires greater citizen control on the actions of the public powers."[34]

The first action taken by President Lagos was a Presidential Instruction for Citizen Participation, an executive order governing all employees who work in government and instructions on how to relate to citizens. It's fundamental principles are:

> **"Deferential treatment**, based on the dignity of all individuals and on the duty of service of the public sector. **Transparency of performance**, through greater communication and openness with the citizenry. **Equal opportunity to participate**, creating conditions to enable the access of the more vulnerable sectors. **Respect for the independence and diversity of the civil society organization**, avoiding any kind of discrimination and manipulation. **Focus on the citizenry**, favoring the participation of the end recipients of policies, programs, and services, i.e., the users, consumers, beneficiaries, etc." [bold in the original][35]

Under the three-year plan, President Lagos first promises to seek changes in Chile's legal and regulatory framework, including expediting the process required to obtain legal status as a nonprofit (estimated by Juan Francisco Lecaros of the nonprofit Corporación Simón de Cirene to take about eight months) and changing tax laws to grant benefits to nonprofits. The plan also says, "It is the government's top priority for citizens to participate in this discussion," signaling that citizen participation will be part of the process for developing ways to increase citizen participation. The plan also makes specific promises relative to community neighborhood organizations, including enhancing the effectiveness of local ordinances for citizen participation and enhancing the participation of local organizations in municipal decisions.

The steps proposed for federal funding of citizen organizations are ambitious. Already in existence are the Solidarity and Social Investment Fund and the Fund of the Americas. The former fund has been used to finance more than 12,000 "microprojects of lower-income sectors throughout the country." The latter is a joint initiative created by the governments of Chile and the United States. Both provide funds for services to implement public policies. But the President also plans to create two new funds for citizen organizations. One, the Mixed (from public and private contributions) Fund for Institutional Development, is aimed not just at starting new projects or delivering services—as we usually do in the U.S.—but at strengthening the citizen organizations themselves and helping ensure their long-term viability. This fund is to be managed by a combination of government, donor, and civil society representatives. The second new fund, the Neighborhood Development Fund, will provide direct funding to local organizations, so again there is a national component and local component to the strategy. This money will come from a percentage of the additional resources expected from a revaluation of real property that took effect in 2002. Lastly, within a year, the government promises to submit changes in the tax laws that will be designed to increase charitable giving by individuals and by businesses. Current tax law provides no tax incentives for individuals to give, and corporations get tax deductions only for contributions in a small range of areas.

To strengthen the civil society organizations, the government not only proposes the two new funds above, but also plans a nationwide study "of the current demand for training and technical assistance" by the different types of civil society organizations, as well as a register of providers of training and technical assistance services, by

***Juan Francisco Lecaros of Corporación Simón de Cirene***

*Ran Coble*

***Jorge Navarrete is advisor for citizen participation to Chile's President Ricardo Lagos. He is shown here with Ran Coble before a poster of Chilean poet Nicanor Parra.***

geographical area and subject taught. The resulting Training and Technical Assistance Program is intended to benefit 5,000 community organizations and more than 400 non-governmental organizations, corporations, and foundations.

The President's plan also promotes creation of an interactive Website where nonprofits can exchange information and experiences. A national public registry of all civil society organizations will be produced, and Community Infocenters are planned at the local level. All of this is "aimed at enforcing the principle of equal access to information" and "closing the digital gap" at the local level.

Another piece of the plan to strengthen the nonprofit sector is the government's wish "to further and encourage a culture of solidarity in our country." The vehicle here is to take steps to encourage volunteer work, which will include creating volunteer centers to act as intermediaries between individual volunteers (the supply) and those organizations needing volunteers (the demand) and to train institutions in how to use volunteers.

Finally, President Lagos' plan outlines proposals for other forms of cooperation between the government and civil society. This includes having each ministry, or department, meet with civil society organizations annually to evaluate their work together and plan priorities for the following year. Each ministry is charged with:

- including citizen participation elements in planning their policies and public programs;
- proposing regulatory and legislative changes to strengthen citizen participation;
- providing "the greatest amount of information possible" to citizens;
- increasing the participation of women; and
- including citizen participation in the *evaluation* of government policies and programs—"in particular in the evaluation of the recipients of such policies and programs." In determining the winners of the National Award for Quality in Public Services, new consideration will be given to the relationship between the government agency and citizens.

Interestingly, Chile does not have a national organization that can speak for the nonprofit sector, such as Independent Sector or the National Council of Nonprofit Associations in the United States or the Foro del Sector Social in Argentina. Nor does it have a publication creating sector awareness and discussing countrywide nonprofit issues, such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* or *Nonprofit World* in the United States or *Tercer Sector* magazine in Argentina. The Chilean President's plan ends with an expression of interest in establishing a National Civil Society Forum as a setting for future discussion and meetings between the government and representatives of civil society.

One of the driving forces behind this exemplary plan for increased citizen participation in Chile is Jorge Navarrete, director of the Division of Social Organizations in the Ministry of the Secretary General of the Government. Only 30 years old, he already has served two presidents. A lawyer by training, he has an office in the presidential

palace, La Moneda, with posters of Matisse paintings, the Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, and various Paris scenes on his office walls. His commitment to implementing this plan for citizen participation and strengthening civil society is impressive. When I ask him what most worries him and what most excites him in this job, he says he is worried by the "authoritarian culture, the vertical, client-oriented society that is part of Chile's recent past under the military government." But what excites him is the "idea that the citizen is now reaching his proper destiny and will get responsibility for his proper destiny."

A few days earlier, Soledad Teixidó of the nonprofit PROhumana had responded to a similar question by saying that what encouraged her most about developments in citizen participation in Chile was the symbolic act of President Lagos opening the doors of La Moneda to the public. The presidential palace had been closed to the public for 17 years under Pinochet, she said, but now, "The people have the right to be in public buildings again. It is only a symbol, but an important one."

Similarly, Navarrete offers three images to express his hopes for increased citizen participation. He says, "The first image is of it raining for a long time. The second image is that after the rain, the sun came up. Third, a rainbow appeared. We know that the rainbow exists—that it is at the end. We have to walk, and it is far—very, very far. But we know where it is, and we are going that way. And we have to make the effort."

***Soledad Teixidó of PROhumana***

*Ran Coble*

### Efforts at the Local Government Level

President Lagos' opponent for the Chilean presidency in 1999 was Joaquín Lavín, now mayor of Santiago and then mayor of the smaller municipality of Las Condes. And it is in this small municipality on the east side of Santiago that some of the most innovative experiments in citizen participation have taken place. In effect, Chilean political rivals are competing for who can come up with the most and best methods of citizen participation. In Las Condes, the citizens are invited to participate in four ways—in regular *surveys on their views on public issues*, in *polls to make small decisions* like naming streets, in *surveys to make larger decisions about the allocation of public funds*, and in *evaluating* the quality of city services.

In 1993, Mayor Lavín polled the citizens of Las Condes about what they thought the priorities should be among various alternative projects—a new municipal building to consolidate all the services and departments in one place, a municipal theater, a gym for sports, programs to control drugs, citizen safety projects, and infrastructure needs such as streets and underpasses. The technical staff of the municipality anticipated the surveys would result in top billing for the municipal building and theater, but instead the citizens voted to give top priority to the drug programs, citizen safety projects, and streets and underpasses. The mayor and city council decided to go with the citizens' votes and allocated the money accordingly.

Subsequently, citizens were asked to choose among alternative sex education programs, a controversial topic in a Catholic country. Then the city asked the public for their views on the municipal building plan, including which areas to designate commercial and which residential. Chilean law requires municipalities to solicit citizens' views on building plans, but most mayors just display a proposed map in city hall and make little real effort to involve citizens. Las Condes made it easy to become involved, providing paper ballots placed in locations with high volumes of foot traffic such as supermarkets, churches, and subway entrances. They advertised the proposals, held 10 public meetings, and placed a big tent with maps and ballots in

front of city hall. "You could say that the object of our citizen participation efforts is to get people inside the tent," says María Inés Suarez, director of the Education and Health Corporation for the municipality.

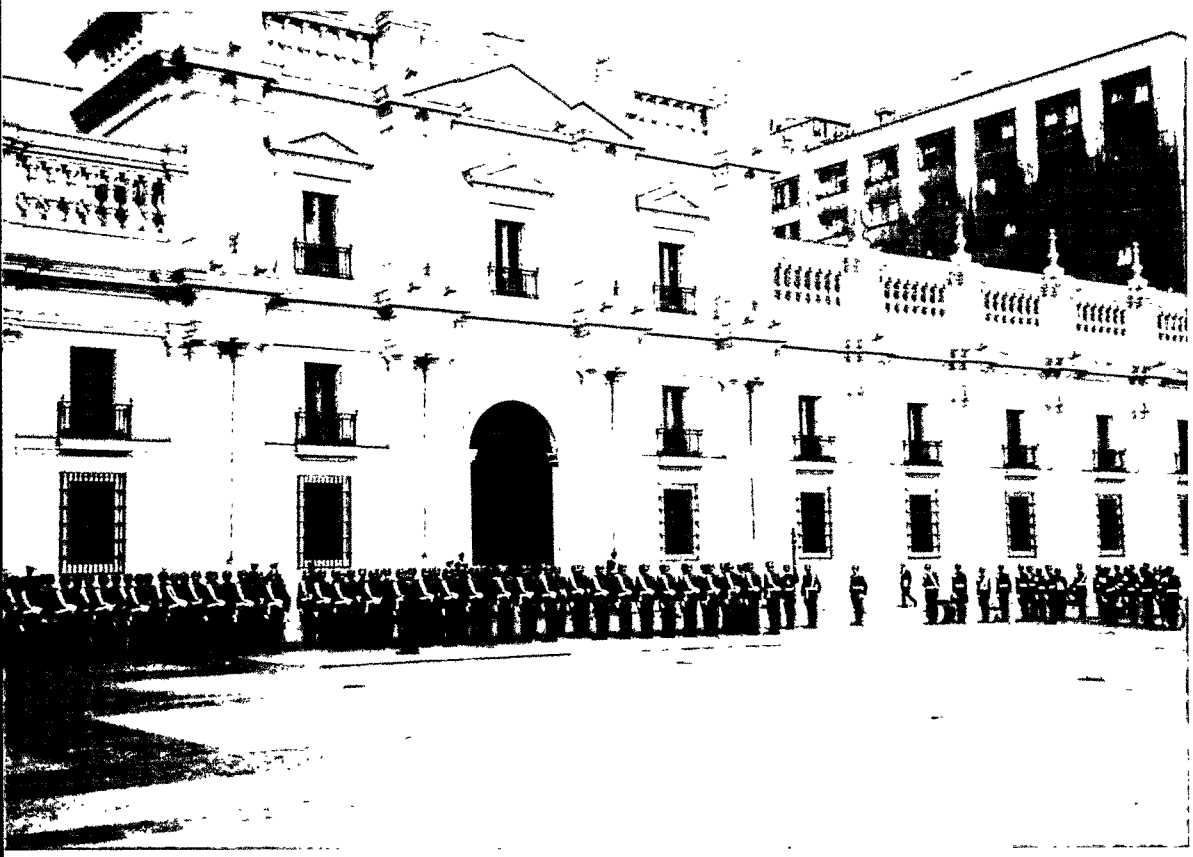
Some polls are used to give "small decisions" to the citizens on such issues as naming streets, the direction of one-way streets, and names for schools—decisions that don't involve money. However, other polls are used to allocate a substantial part of the municipality's budget. About 40 percent of the area's budget is discretionary and not mandated by the national government. The citizens have a lot of say in allocating funds within this part of the budget. For example, they are asked for their views in putting together the annual plans in health and education, including questions asking about the most significant health problems and priorities among possible solutions. In one poll, the citizens said access to health care was the most significant problem. They also identified several solutions, including a system of appointments for particular hours made by telephone, as well as a system of mini-health centers spread throughout the area, instead of centralized hospitals. The municipality implemented these suggestions, and in the next poll, access to health care dropped from the top of the list of health problems.

Once a year, residents pay a "circulation tax" based on the value of their cars. You can pay the tax almost anywhere in metropolitan Santiago, so the municipality of Las Condes advertised to "pay your tax here," thereby gaining a little extra revenue. At the same time, however, Las Condes asked taxpayers where to invest that revenue. Even more importantly, the municipality later sent a letter back to the taxpayers telling them the results of the survey *and* how the money was spent in accordance with their wishes.

This leads to still another purpose of the citizen participation in Las Condes—to evaluate government programs and services. In health, for example, on one day, all the citizens visiting all local health facilities were asked questions about their health needs and the attention and care they received that day. The poll results showed that people were having to get up at 4 a.m. to wait in long lines for health services, wait 10 months for surgeries in local hospitals, and that they had three to four health problems at a time, not one. This led the city to establish a system of appointments at certain hours by telephone and design a special type of insurance for heads of poor households that would lead to treatment within a week.

***Leonardo Galvez, Luz María Vergara, and María Inés Suarez, municipal officials of Las Condes, and Fernando Rojas, translator***

*Ran Coble*



Ran Coble

***La Moneda Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile with the military forming for a ceremony.***

When Lavín ran for mayor of Las Condes the first time, he won with a plurality of 40 percent of the vote. After instituting these citizen participation measures, he won his bid for re-election with 80 percent of the vote. "After this, Las Condes municipality cannot do anything without asking the people," laughs Luz María Vergara, a lawyer for the municipality. "People ask you to ask them their opinion. They want to decide. They want to say, 'Hey, what are you going to do with the money?' So you just change the culture and make things the other way around."

Local officials in the United States considering such extensive efforts at participation might raise at least two objections—time and money. The Chileans say their process may delay decisions by a month, but now they have their process down pat and computers allow them to have the poll results the day of the vote, like an election. And, even though it takes a while longer to design and take the poll, they say the decision sticks, which actually may save time over the long run. As to money, the Chileans say they get lots of free media in advertising the polls, the ballots are printed on cheap paper, and again, the costs of making a decision against the wishes of the people is more costly in the long run. And, the other bottom line is that local officials want to be re-elected and this process increases that likelihood. What about the danger of the tyranny of the majority, I ask? What if the polls result in a majority voting to give funds to popular groups such as children but not to unpopular groups such as those with AIDS—even if the AIDS problem is more serious and widespread at the time? The Chileans acknowledge this possibility but remind me that the citizens are voting only on part of the budget and that municipal officials must use their own knowledge and facts in evaluating problems and distributing the rest of the funds. They also say you have to raise the bar gradually, giving people easier decisions like naming streets at first, with the tougher decisions on allocating funds coming later. Still, says Suarez, this kind of citizen participation "leads to better solutions, and you get a better commitment from the people."

*"No one is the homeland. Nor are the symbols.*

. . .

*The homeland, friends, is a continuous act*
*As the world is continuous . . .*

. . .

*No one is the homeland, but we should all*
*Be worthy of that ancient oath*
*Which those gentlemen swore—*
*To be something they didn't know, to be Argentines;*

. . .

*No one is the homeland—it is all of us*
*May that clear, mysterious fire burn*
*Without ceasing, in my breast and yours."*

—FROM "ODE WRITTEN IN 1966," COMPOSED BY ARGENTINA'S JORGE LUIS BORGES FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARGENTINA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*". . . so I went back to my newspaper and read on, like any good citizen."*

—CHILE'S PABLO NERUDA, "THE FIRE"

*"I believe that we are lost in America, but I believe we shall be found. . . . I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land, is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon."*

—NORTH CAROLINA'S THOMAS WOLFE, *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*

I love my country and my state—for what they are and for what they can be. Travel in other countries helps me see my own country and state more clearly—their strengths and their weaknesses, and more importantly, their possibilities. So close your eyes for a moment and imagine. . . .

## Local Government

- Imagine city councils and boards of county commissioners with 25th Chairs for the Citizen of the Day like Mar del Plata and with councils of children like Córdoba's to help foster children's dreams.
- Imagine city-sponsored Houses for Nonprofits and with a designated citizens fund for a Bank of Social Projects, like Córdoba's.
- Imagine cities which use polls, surveys, and the Internet to involve citizens first in making small decisions like naming streets and schools and later in larger decisions like allocating a portion of the city's budget, as Las Condes and Córdoba do.

## State Government

- Imagine a Governor who follows President Ricardo Lagos' example with a Plan to Strengthen Citizen Participation for every department in state government and citizen participation used to develop the plan.
- Imagine a Governor and State Board of Elections who imitate Participa and Poder Ciudadano's work and decide that increasing our low voter participation rate is one of our top priorities and work with the State Board of Elections to get youth in the habit of voting until we are First in America.
- Imagine a Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Board of Education who follow the Argentine Ministry of Education's example and decide that good citizens are as important as end-of-grade test scores and implement Service-Learning Programs in every school in North Carolina.
- Imagine that North Carolina develops a Governor's Award to honor schools for work done in the community in service-learning and civic education—similar to the Presidential Award in Argentina—which awards cash prizes and scholarships for winning students and provides grants to enhance service-learning programs for winning schools.
- Imagine that same Superintendent and State Board working with Exploris Middle School,

Raleigh Charter, and other schools to develop a UN Assembly Program like Conciencia's so that our youth learn how people in other countries view us and the world.

- Imagine North Carolina's five law schools imitating the University of Palermo in fostering legal literacy for citizens and nonprofits and taking on a number of public interest law cases.
- Imagine our 16 public universities following Participa's The University Builds the Country example with citizens and nonprofits and asking what they can do for North Carolina in public service.

## The News Media

- Imagine the WUNC statewide public television network televising a new weekly half-hour program called "Good News" to show how citizen and nonprofits are making a difference and solving problems in their communities.
- Imagine WRAL-TV in Raleigh, WSOC-TV in Charlotte, WFMY-TV in High Point, WNCT-TV in Greenville, WWAY-TV in Wilmington, and other TV stations all broadcasting two-to-three minute inserts of "Moments of Citizen Power" between regular TV programs like Poder Ciudadano showing citizens succeeding in solving problems and affecting public policy.
- Imagine *The News and Observer*, *The Charlotte Observer*, the Greensboro *News and Record,* and other newspapers across North Carolina following *La Nacion's* lead and publishing free daily classified ads of people's needs in their communities, publishing weekly Thursday supplements devoted to three or four key state issues (maybe based on their "Your Voice Your Vote" polls), and publishing a monthly Sunday special section on one of these big issues showing how citizens can get involved in working on them.

## The Business Community

- Imagine that N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry followed *Apertura* magazine's lead and worked with the N.C. Center for Nonprofits to devote one issue of NCCBI's *North Carolina* magazine a year to the nonprofit sector, with stories of business/nonprofit partnerships, profiles of corporate giving programs, and discussions of corporate social responsibility.

## The Nonprofit Sector

- Imagine that the N.C. Center for Nonprofits followed the example of the Russian Agency for Social Information and started a wire news service of stories on nonprofits that could be distributed to all media outlets.
- Imagine that Urban Ministries and other nonprofit organizations that serve the poor followed La Luciérnaga's example and involved street children and homeless youth in producing a magazine that made the problems of the poor real to the average citizen, with the sales revenue going to help solve the problem.
- Imagine North Carolina's 997 grantmaking foundations issuing Requests for Proposals to try any of these ideas.
- Imagine our own Juan Carr—call him John Kerr—out there somewhere right now with a group of friends and cell phones deciding to change the face of citizen participation and civic education in North Carolina—and winning a Nobel Prize for it in 2012.

If you can imagine them, the dreams become real.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY 2000), pp. 32–33, 35, 41 and 45, 36 and 63, 142, and 47. The survey about lack of knowledge of history of the U.S. by teenagers is from a 2001 survey by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, released on July 4, 2001. The data about North Carolina is from the Civic Education Consortium, Institute of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

[2] Jorge Luis Borges, "Another Poem of Gifts," in *Selected Poems 1923–1967*, Penguin Books (New York, NY:1972), pp. 218–223.

[3] Marta Oyhanarte, *Cómo Ejercer Su Poder Ciudadano*, Tesis-Grupo Editorial Norma (Buenos Aires: 1992), p. 22.

[4] Transparency International, *Annual Report 2000*, Berlin, Germany, p. 7.

[5] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Just," in *Selected Poems*, Viking Penguin (New York, NY: 1999), p. 449.

[6] Project Citizen is based on a 15-year-old program of the same name developed in the United States, according to Debra Henzey of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, a program of the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The curriculum was developed by the Center for Civic Education in California and funded by Congress. "It has been used in many places throughout the U.S., but rarely in schools because it is perceived as too time-consuming and materials are expensive for teachers to buy," says Henzey.

[7] Borges, *Selected Poems 1923–1967*, note 2 above, pp. 25 and 27.

[8] Fundación Ciudad, "*Foro El Agua en Buenos Aires*, 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina, pp. 25–29, for example.

# *Many Seek To Encourage Civic Participation in N.C. and the U.S.*

While Argentina and Chile make a strong impression with their efforts to increase citizen participation and civic education, many organizations in the U.S. and North Carolina continue to encourage civic activities as well. These include the National Civic League in Denver, Colo., the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, Calif., the National Council for the Social Studies in Washington, D.C., and the Center for Participatory Change in Asheville, N.C. All have developed and piloted programs similar to those operating in Argentina and Chile, according to Debra Henzey, executive director of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, a program of the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Many of these programs focus on promoting youth involvement, which is viewed as planting the seeds for future civic involvement. The National Civic League, for example, offers small grants to cities and counties that more effectively involve young people in meaningful activities, says Henzey. Closer to home in North Carolina, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has had a longstanding commitment to civic education and involvement, as have the Institute of Government, the N.C. City-County Management Association, Students Against Violence Everywhere, and the Mediation Network.

These North Carolina efforts led to the founding of the Civic Education Consortium, the first organization in the nation doing such work at the state level. With funding from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the consortium has helped fund civic participation efforts across the state. It also is helping students in more than 20 high schools inventory public concerns of their classmates and develop ways to engage them in service-learning projects to address those concerns.

However, Henzey notes that the consortium's efforts have not generated strong support from public officials, education leaders, or the business community. "Thus, our ability to reach large numbers of people is limited." Another important point, says Henzey, is that too many civic engagement initiatives in North Carolina are led by government officials rather than the broader public. "This means the parameters of these programs are determined by people already in power and often do not open the doors to those who have the least power."

A growing arena for encouraging civic participation in the United States is the service-learning movement. According to a 1999 survey by the U.S. Department of Education, 64 percent of all public schools and 83 percent of all public high schools organize some form of community service for their students. Research has shown significant results from this movement. The positive findings include development of civic and social responsibility and citizenship skills, enhanced ability to make a positive social contribution, and even stronger academic performance.

An important component of service learning is that students not only serve by addressing a social problem such as hunger in a nation that produces a surplus of food, but learn about the social context in which the social problem has developed.[1] Thus, students would not merely serve meals in a soup kitchen, but study the broader issues of poverty and hunger. The movement also carries a sense that the poor not merely receive services but be actively engaged in the process that meets their needs with the hope that they can maintain their dignity and move toward self-sufficiency where possible.

However, the strongest beneficiaries may be the students who participate. A well-run program can impart the lesson that their efforts can make a difference. There may be no greater motivator to citizen participation and public service.

*—Mike McLaughlin*

FOOTNOTE

[1] For a list of principles of good practice in combining service and learning, see Jane Kendall and Associates, *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service, Volume I*, National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, Raleigh, N.C., 1990, p. 40.

*Mike McLaughlin is editor of* North Carolina Insight.

[9] Fundación Ciudad, *Uso Sustenible de la Ribera Metropolitana: Propuestas Consensuadas 1998•2000•2001*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, pp. 5 ff.

[10] See Tom Mather, "Civic Journalism: Strengthening the Media's Ties with the Public, *North Carolina Insight*, Vol. 15, No. 4/Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 1995), N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, Raleigh, North Carolina, pp. 70–87.

[11] As quoted in "A Boy Scout's Attitude," *Apertura* magazine, special edition on the social, or third sector, October 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina, p. 26 (English) and p. 97 Spanish.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Alicia Cytrynblum, "Mass Circulation Solidarity," *Apertura*, note 11 above, p. 18 (English) and p. 85 (Spanish).

[14] Both Argentina and the United States also have academic journals focusing on the nonprofit sector, such as *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* and *Voluntas*.

[15] As reported in Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, *Manual on Public Participation in Environmental Decisionmaking*, 1994, p. 48.

[16] North Carolina Session Law 2001–363 (House Bill 195), now codified as N.C.G.S. 115C-81(g1)(1).

[17] Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, "28-Nation Study: Students' Grasp of Civics Is Mixed," *Education Week*, (Washington, D.C., March 21, 2001), pp. 1 and 14.

[18] *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* U.S. Department of Education, National Commission on Excellence in Education, Washington, D.C., April 1983.

[19] As quoted in "A Step That Led the Way," *Apertura* magazine (Buenos Aires, Argentina: October 1999), p. 17, note 11 above.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] "Approach (perspective) to learn Ethics and Civic (Citizenship) Formation (Education): seven questions," from the Ethics and Citizen Formation Program, Ministry of Education, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

[22] From "Service-Learning in Argentina," School and Community Program, Ministry of Education, Buenos Aires, Argentina, pp. 1–2.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] "Confidence in Different Institutions in the Resolution of Social Problems, Gallup Poll for the Foro del Sector Social, September 1998, as reprinted in the *Guide for Undertaking a Service-Learning Project*, Part 1, National School and Community Program, Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 12. For the 2001 poll, see Marita Carballo, "The Social Sector: An Opportunity for Growth—The Argentine Case," Gallup Argentina, poll sample of all Argentinians over 17 years old, p. 3.

[25] As reported in Diane Ravitch, "Now Is the Time To Teach Democracy," *Education Week*, (Washington, D.C.: October 17, 2001), p. 48.

[26] Mate is the national drink of Argentina, a sort of bitter tea.

[27] Both Pereira quotes as reported in Marysol Antón, "Puente de afecto que enlaza generaciones," in *La Nación's* special Solidarity Schools supplement (Buenos Aires, Argentina: March 18, 2001), p. 5.

[28] This story is reported in "Service-Learning in Argentina," note 22 above, pp. 3–5.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[30] Gabriela Mistral, "Chile," in Marjorie Agosin, editor, *A Gabriela Mistral Reader*, White Pine Press (Fredonia, NY: 1977), pp. 173 and 175.

[31] Interview with Benito Baranda, Paulo Egenau, and Veronica Monroy at Hogar de Cristo's offices on July 5, 2001, Santiago, Chile. Also see Judith Salinas and Giorgio Solimano, "Chilean Health NGOs," in Charles A. Reilly, editor, *New Paths to Democratic Development in Latin America*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. (Boulder, CO: 1995), pp. 153–154.

[32] "Index of Perception of Corruption of 2001," press release issued June 27, 2001, by Transparency International, based in Berlin and London.

[33] *Annual Report 2000*, Transparency International, Berlin, Germany, p. 1.

[34] Minister Secretary General of the Government's Office, Government of Chile, *Plan for Strengthening Civil Society*, Santiago, Chile, May 2, 2001, p. 1.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 2.


*Ran Coble*

***A demonstration in favor of "pluralism of information" in front of the Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile***

# Tips, Tactics, Technology, and Techniques: Lessons in Advocacy from N.C.'s Most Influential Lobbyists

by Sam Watts

For the past 11 legislative sessions, the Center has been surveying legislators, lobbyists, and the capital news media to determine who are the most influential players in Raleigh's legislative advocacy corps. This year, after tabulating the survey that identified the most influential lobbyists, the Center decided to conduct a follow-up survey to study tactics, technology, and techniques the state's most influential lobbyists utilize in their lobbying practice.[1] Forty-two of the 48 lobbyists (88 percent) responded in a thoughtful look at the state of their profession in North Carolina. They also offered some notable insights on how to be an effective advocate in trying to pass, kill, or modify legislation in the N.C. General Assembly.

While the most influential lobbyists the Center surveyed reported widespread use of new technologies, they believe that the most effective lobbying technique is still developing personal relationships with lawmakers and providing timely credible information. This conclusion is supported by the responses to three major questions in the survey. 1) Of twelve specific tactics lobbyists were asked to rate, "personally meeting with legislators in their offices or in an informal setting such as over a meal" was rated most effective. 2) Of four factors listed in evaluating a lobbyist's influence, "the ability to communicate accurate information on the legislation in question" ranked highest. 3) Of five ways for citizens to contact legislators, "in-person" got the nod as the best method.

"There is a time and place for every one of the new tools in the lobbyist's toolbox," says Roger Bone, a contract lobbyist who ranks as the third most influential. "The art of lobbying today is knowing which tool to use, when to use it, and when not to over-use it. If you encourage fourteen-dozen constituents to call a lawmaker on a non-controversial issue, you're wasting the legislator's time, but if you were to have those same constituents call the same lawmaker an hour before a meeting where he is the swing vote on your legislation, you might accomplish something."

*Editor's Note: This is one of a series of articles highlighting research by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. Here, Center policy analyst Sam Watts discusses the Center's rankings of the state's most influential lobbyists in the 2001 General Assembly, as well as a follow-up survey that gauges trends in lobbying tactics, technology, and techniques among the state's most influential lobbyists.*

*Sam Watts is a policy analyst at the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research.*

## Who Are N.C.'s Most Influential Lobbyists?

Among the 48 most influential lobbyists in the 2001 legislative session are eight women, one African-American, 27 lawyers, and nine former legislators, six of whom are lawyers. The average age of the group is 53, while the youngest lobbyist on

the list is 32, and the most senior is 75. Four are public interest lobbyists, 26 are contract lobbyists,[2] and 35 have at least one client with a Political Action Committee able to contribute to elections for state office.

## How and Why the Lobbyist Rankings Are Done

This is the eleventh time the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has produced 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 Ran Coble, the executive director of the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. "The rankings shed light on what is often an invisible process and illustrate changes in which issues are hot and in the lobbying profession itself."

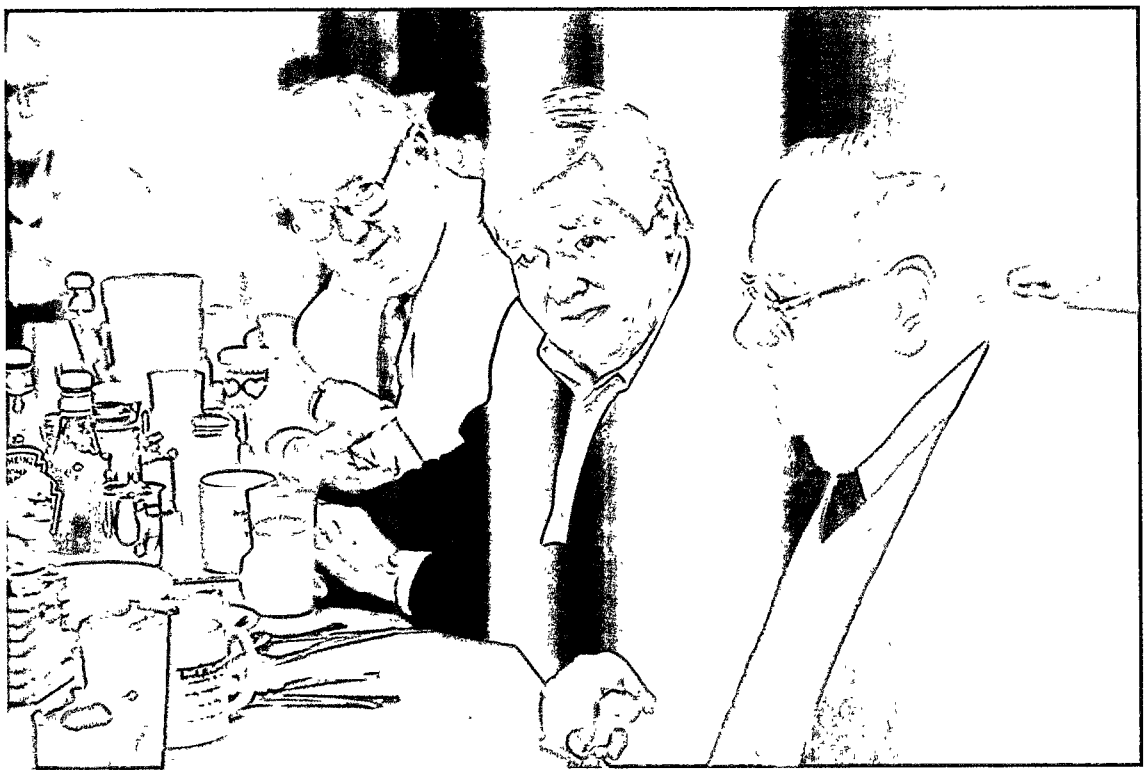
The rankings are based on results from a survey conducted in early 2002 after adjournment of the regular session of the N.C. General Assembly in December 2001. All 170 state legislators, as well as 321 registered lobbyists and legislative liaisons based in North Carolina, and the 28 capital news correspondents were asked to list the most influential lobbyists or legislative liaisons of the 2001 General Assembly session. Survey respondents received a list of all lobbyists and legislative liaisons registered with the Secretary of State at the end of the 2001 session.

Seventy-two of the 120 House members (60 percent) responded to the Center's survey, as did 27 of the 50 Senators (54 percent), 146 of the 321 registered lobbyists who regularly work in the legislature and who are based in North Carolina (45 percent), and 15 of the 28 capital news correspondents (54 percent). The overall response rate was 50 percent.

During the 2001 session, 580 lobbyists registered with the Secretary of State, representing 657 different companies or organizations. The Center's calculations of the number of lobbyists avoids double-counting by counting each lobbyist only once, even if the lobbyist represented more than one client. Lobbyists included in the survey are based in North Carolina and regularly work the General Assembly. There were also 168 legislative liaisons representing 40 different state government agencies and licensing boards, but the Center surveys only the lead liaison for each agency.

***Lobbyists find Finch's Restaurant in Raleigh to be a fine place to jump start the morning.***

*Karen Tam*



Karen Tam

***Zebulon Alley, ranked the state's most influential lobbyist for the eighth consecutive session, with former Sen. Aaron Plyler (D-Union) on the right and Roger Bone (left), also consistently ranked among the five most influential lobbyists.***

## Companies and Groups That Hire Top Lobbyists Also Have PACs

In the latest lobbying rankings, the Center notes how many of the state's top lobbyists have at least one client able to donate money to state political campaigns. Nearly three quarters of the lobbyists ranked among the most influential represent at least one client able to make campaign contributions. Of the 697 businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies with lobbyists registered with the Secretary of State's office at the end of the 2001 session, 303, or 43 percent, have at least one lobbyist ranked among the 48 most influential. Of those 303 groups, 72, or 24 percent, have a state or federal political action committee (PAC) eligible to make donations to state political campaigns. Of the 48 most influential lobbyists, 35, or 73 percent, represent at least one of the 72 companies or interest groups with PACs.

For example, Zebulon D. Alley, who ranked 1st in this year's rankings for the eighth consecutive session, represents 13 clients, of which the N.C. Vendors' Association, Progress Energy, and Sprint have PACs. The second highest ranked lobbyist, Don Beason, represents 14 clients, of which BB&T, BellSouth Telecommunications, and Progress Energy have PACs. And, at least four law firms engaged in lobbying have PACs registered under the names of their firms. Three of those firms—Parker, Poe, Adams and Bernstein; Jordan, Price, Wall, Gray and Jones; and Kennedy, Covington, Lobdell and Hickman—have at least one lobbyist who made the rankings.

When the legislature is not in session, PACs and lobbyists may contribute up to $4,000 per election (primary and general election) to candidates for state office. The degree to which a lobbyist is involved with a PAC varies as each client chooses. Some PACs involve their lobbyists in raising funds, making decisions on contributions, and disbursing funds, while others do not.

Influential lobbyists who do not have clients with PACs include Paula Wolf (ranked 12th), who lobbies for the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, a coalition of nonprofit groups advocating for children; James B. Blackburn III (tied for 44th), who represents the N.C. Association of County Commissioners; and Leanne Winner (46th), who lobbies for the N.C. School Boards Association.

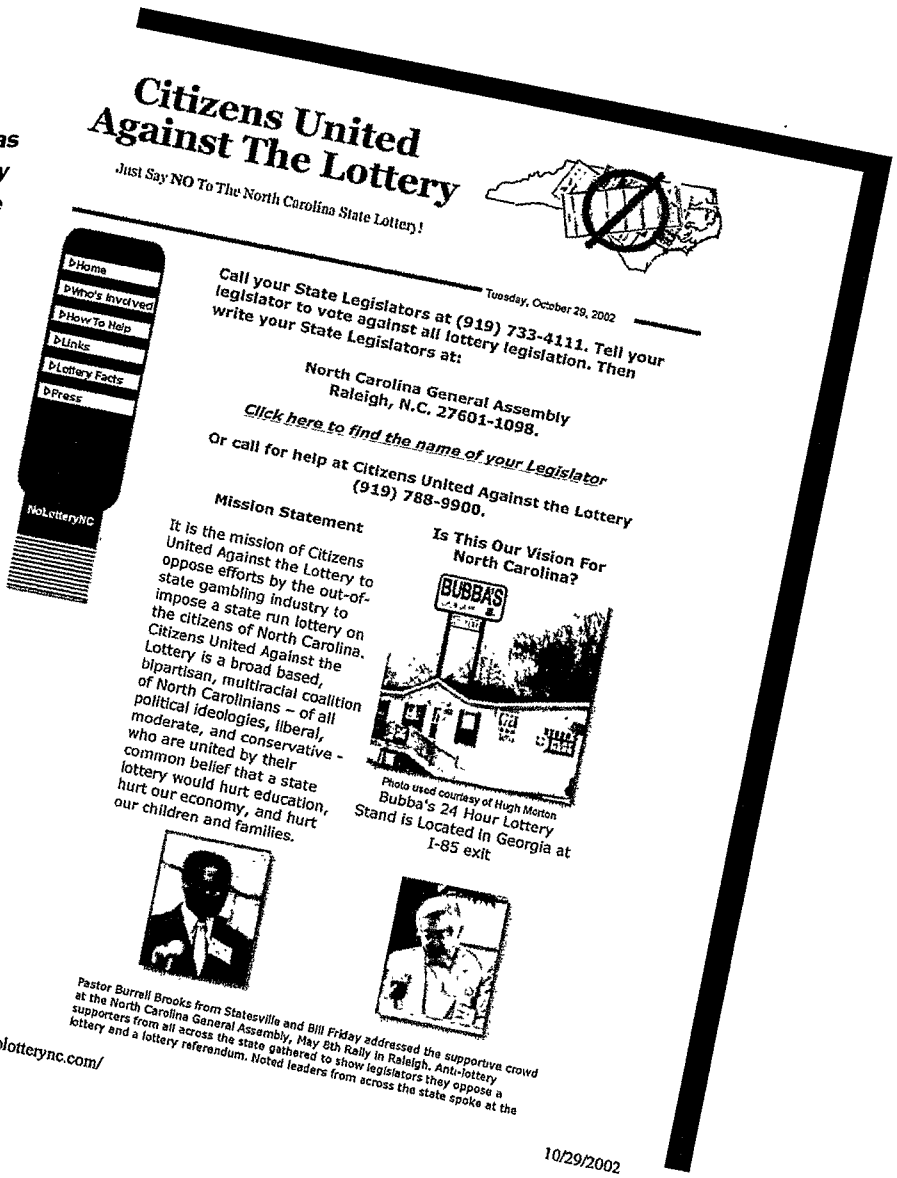
## Lobbyists on Both Sides of Lottery Debate Gain Influence

Having a hot issue before the General Assembly raises a lobbyist's profile and provides the opportunity to perform well in influencing legislation. Eight of the 48 most influential lobbyists worked on one side or the other of the hot debate over a proposed state lottery in the 2001 session. Of these eight, three improved their rankings from the previous legislative session, and three made the list for the first time.

Pro-lottery lobbyists ranked among the most influential included contract lobbyists Al Adams (ranked 6th) and Jack Cozort (ranked 17th), both representing GTECH, a company that operates lotteries in 25 states and 42 foreign countries. Gov. Mike Easley has pushed for the lottery, and two of his lobbyists, Franklin Freeman (10th) and Kevin Howell (40th), were ranked among the most influential.

The Center's survey showed that anti-lottery lobbyists from different points in the political spectrum also had influence with legislators. Dan Gerlach (ranked 11th) lobbied against the lottery while at the liberal-leaning N.C. Budget and Tax Center, as did Charles B. (Chuck) Neely, Jr. (ranked 16th), a former Republican state Representative and volunteer chairman of the bipartisan Citizens United Against the Lottery, and William Brooks (38th) of the conservative N.C. Family Policy Council. Ironically, after the 2001 session,

***Web pages such as this one put up by Citizens Against The Lottery are among the new techniques being used in issues-oriented lobbying.***



Gov. Easley hired Gerlach, the highest-ranked anti-lottery lobbyist, and turned him into a pro-lottery lobbyist in the 2002 session. In September 2002, the N.C. House of Representatives defeated legislation proposing a non-binding referendum on a state lottery in a 69–50 vote of the 120-member chamber.

"Each session, hot issues make hot lobbyists," says the Center's Coble. "This session, lobbyists involved in the debate over a proposed state lottery spent lots of time in the legislature. Their influence hit the jackpot and rose as a result."

## Bubba versus Jim and Bill

The lottery debate provides another example of how lobbyists are employing more sophisticated tactics. The fight spilled out of the legislative building, onto the airwaves, and into voters' telephone lines. During lottery deliberations, a pro-lottery group called The N.C. Lottery for Education Coalition aired television ads featuring a fictional character called "Bubba" dressed in a South Carolina Gamecocks T-Shirt and hat who taunted North Carolinians for not having a state lottery. "Thank goodness your legislators in Raleigh won't give you your own education lottery," Bubba says in the ad. "So now you know why, here in South Carolina, we just luuuv your good ol' North Carolina legislature."

Meanwhile, an anti-lottery group, N.C. Citizens United Against the Lottery used pre-recorded telephone messages from former Gov. Jim Martin, a two-term Republican, and former UNC President Bill Friday encouraging citizens to contact legislators to oppose the state lottery. "I oppose a state lottery in North Carolina because it would hurt the existing education budget and does not represent our North Carolina values. It's a dishonest tax," said Governor Martin in his telephone message. Friday said on his recording, "I oppose a state lottery because it preys on our most vulnerable citizens and puts our state in the gambling business."

The lottery was just one issue where lobbyists employed advertising and telephone contact services during the 2001 legislative session. James Sexton, president of Raleigh-based Telephone Strategies Group, reports having six N.C. legislative clients and dozens of others across the country that used telephone operations to connect supporters or opponents of legislation with their representatives. "Grassroots and legislative contact business is a growing part of my practice," says Sexton, "There's always a group with an issue, looking for a way for their message to be heard."

**Table 1. Demographic Trends in the Most Influential Lobbyist Rankings, 1987–2001**

| Legislative Session | Total Lobbyists Ranked | Women | Percent | Highest Rank | African Americans | Percent | Lawyers | Percent | Former Legislators | Percent | Former Legislators and Lawyers | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2001 | 48 | 8 | 17% | 5 | 1 | 2% | 27 | 56% | 9 | 19% | 6 | 13% |
| 1999 | 50 | 10 | 20% | 7 | 0 | 0% | 24 | 48% | 10 | 20% | 5 | 10% |
| 1997 | 50 | 12 | 24% | 12 | 1 | 2% | 22 | 44% | 9 | 18% | 5 | 10% |
| 1995 | 50 | 10 | 20% | 27 | 0 | 0% | 20 | 40% | 10 | 20% | 5 | 10% |
| 1993 | 50 | 11 | 22% | 14 | 0 | 0% | 21 | 42% | 9 | 18% | 6 | 12% |
| 1991 | 37 | 9 | 24% | 12 | 0 | 0% | 16 | 43% | 10 | 27% | 7 | 19% |
| 1989 | 40 | 8 | 20% | 6 | 0 | 0% | 17 | 43% | 12 | 30% | 8 | 20% |
| 1987 | 32 | 5 | 16% | 17 | 0 | 0% | 14 | 44% | 11 | 34% | 7 | 22% |

Karen Tam

***Lobbyist, lawyer, and former legislator Chuck Neely***

Long-time legislative observers often question the cost-effectiveness of using advertising or telephone contact services. However, many lobbyists see the decision to use these types of tactics as a strategic choice, based on the particular issue and the timing in the debate. Advertising seeks to activate constituents who already have opinions on an issue, encouraging them to contact legislators while the issue is on the front burner of public debate. Similarly, telephone messages encourage a previously identified group of supporters or opponents to contact their legislators on a specific issue. Approximately one-third of the influential lobbyists completing the follow-up survey say they have used telephone contact services, while more than 40 percent say they have used advertising.

## Lawyers and Former Legislators Still Dominate Top Spots in Influence

Still, the rankings support the notion that personal contact by a former legislative colleague may be the most effective technique, and legal skills don't hurt either. Lawyers and former legislators continue to dominate the top spots in the lobbyist rankings. Twenty-seven of the 48 most influential lobbyists, or 56 percent, are lawyers, the highest percentage in more than a decade. Nine of the 48 most influential, or 19 percent, are former legislators. Five of the lobbyists who are former legislators and also lawyers finished in the top 16 in influence.

The six former legislators who also are lawyers are: Zebulon D. Alley (ranked 1st); J. Allen Adams (6th); Alexander P. "Sandy" Sands, III (9th);

*—continues on page 118*

***Those who do not know the plans of competitors cannot prepare alliances. Those who do not know the lay of the land cannot maneuver their forces. Those who do not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground.***

—SUN TZU, *THE ART OF WAR*

## Table 2. Ranking of 16 of the 48 Most Influential

| Lobbyist and Clients | Ranking: 2001–2002 | 1999–2000 | 1997–1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Zebulon D. Alley,** of the Raleigh law firm of Alley Associates, representing the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (MultiState Associates), Deloitte & Touche LLP, Eastern Band of Cherokees, Ernst & Young LLP, KPMG Peat Marwick LLP, Microelectronics Center of N.C. (MCNC), N.C. Association of Pharmacists, N.C. Natural Gas Co., N.C. Vending Assn., PricewaterhouseCoopers, Progress Energy, Sprint, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Don Beason,** of the Raleigh lobbying firm, The Capitol Group, representing BB&T Corp., BellSouth Corporation, Bombardier Inc./Canadair, Carolina Power & Light, Discus, Electronic Data Systems, League of Landscape Architects, Maple Leaf Sports, Inc., Microelectronics Center of N.C. (MCNC), N.C. Natural Gas Co., N.C. Railroad Co., N.C. Restaurant Assn., Progress Energy, and United Health Group. | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| **Roger W. Bone,** of the Raleigh lobbying firm of Bone & Associates, representing Carolina Independent Automobile Dealers Assn., Discover Card, Eastern Equipment Dealers Assn., Eli Lilly & Company, The Hunter Group, Lorillard Tobacco Co., Morgan Stanley Dean Witter & Co. (MultiState Associates), N.C. Assn., Long Term Care Facilities, N.C. Firemen's Assn., N.C. Propane Gas Assn., N.C. Society of Enrolled Agents, N.C. State Coalition 2000, Resident Lenders of N.C., Sprint, and Universal Leaf Tobacco Company Inc. | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| **B. Davis Horne, Jr.,** of the Raleigh law firm of Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan, representing Brady Sales and Service Inc., Carolina Power & Light, Centex Rooney Construction Co., Committee on State Taxation, Community Financial Services Association (MultiState Associates), Electronic Data Systems, EMC Corp., Ford Motor Co., National Assn. of Independent Insurers, N.C. Medical Society, N.C. Natural Gas Co., N.C. Troopers Assn., Progress Energy, Sandhills Physicians Inc., 3M Corp., Variable Annuity Life Insurance Company (VALIC Corporation), and Waste Management. | 4 | 20 | 21 |
| **Leslie H. Bevacqua,** representing North Carolina Citizens for Business & Industry. | 5 | 7 | 12 |

## Lobbyists in the 2001 N.C. General Assembly

| 1995–1996 | 1993–1994 | 1991–1992 | 1989–1990 | 1987–1988 | 1985–1986 | Former Legislator? | Lawyer? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | yes | yes |
| 3 | 32 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | no |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 14 | n/a | yes | no |
| 22 | n/a | 33 | 32 | n/a | n/a | no | yes |
| 27 | 31 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | no |

*—continues*

## Table 2. Ranking of 16 of the 48 Most Influential

| Lobbyist and Clients | Ranking: 2001–2002 | 1999–2000 | 1997–1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **J. Allen Adams,** of the Raleigh office of the law firm of Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein, representing ACS Government Services, Affordable Housing Coalition, Brisben Companies, Christenbury Surgery Center, Consulting Engineers Council of N.C., Environmental Systems Products, GTECH, N.C. Biotechnology Center, N.C. Citizens for Community Action, N.C. Head Start Assn., N.C. Retired Governmental Employees Assn., Nextel, North Carolinians Against Gun Violence, Royal Purple, Sun Microsystems, Triangle Transit Authority, and the Tsunami Fund. | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| **John T. Bode,** of the Raleigh law firm of Bode, Call & Stroupe, representing Accenture LLP, American College of Radiology-N.C. Chapter, BellSouth Corporation, The Biltmore Co., Bovis Lend Lease Inc., Brynn Marr Behavioral Healthcare System, Carolina Power & Light, Centex Rooney Construction Co., Independent Insurance Agents of N.C. Inc., N.C. Academy of Physician Assistants, N.C. Hospital Assn., N.C. Natural Gas Co., Progress Energy, Wake Forest Univ. Bowman Gray School of Medicine, and the Wine Institute. | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| **John B. McMillan,** of the Raleigh law firm of Manning, Fulton & Skinner, representing Allstate Insurance Co., Anheuser-Busch Companies Inc., Bayer Corporation, Citizens for Quality Healthcare Inc., DIMON International Inc., ElectriCities of N.C. Inc., Food Lion Inc., Friends of the N.C. State Museum of Natural Sciences, Insurance Auto Auctions Corp., Jordan Lumber & Supply Inc., N.C. Assn. of Mortgage Professionals, N.C. Assn. of Realtors Inc., N.C. Bar Assn., The N.C. Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry, N.C. Legal Services Planning Council, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, Standard Commercial Corp., Tobacco Quota Warehouse Alliance, and Westmoreland-LG&E Partners. | 8 | 12 | 9 |
| **Alexander P. "Sandy" Sands, III,** of the Raleigh office of the law firm of Womble, Carlyle, Sandridge & Rice, representing Airport Express Inc., The Association of American Publishers, AT&T, Bio-Medical Applications of Clinton Inc., Bio-Medical Applications of Fayetteville Inc., Bio-Medical Applications of N.C. Inc., Carolinas Healthcare System, Cascade Auto Glass Inc. (MultiState Associates), DirecTV (MultiState Associates), Entergy Wholesale Operations, Guardian Financial Services Inc. dba Fast Check, KoSa, Kraft Foods Incorporated by Philip Morris Management | 9 | 9 | 16 |

*—continues*

## Lobbyists in the 2001 N.C. General Assembly

| 1995–1996 | 1993–1994 | 1991–1992 | 1989–1990 | 1987–1988 | 1985–1986 | Former Legislator? | Lawyer? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | yes | yes |
| 4 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 18 | n/a | no | yes |
| 9 | 18 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | yes |
| 50 (tie) | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | yes | yes |

## Table 2. Ranking of 16 of the 48 Most Influential

| Lobbyist and Clients | Ranking: | 2001–2002 | 1999–2000 | 1997–1998 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Alexander P. "Sandy" Sands, II,*** *continued*<br>Company, Lowe's Companies Inc., MBNA America Bank, N.A., Miller Brewing Company by Philip Morris Management Company, N.C. State Optometric Society Inc., Philip Morris Incorporated by Philip Morris Management Company, Planet Drive Inc., Thomas Built Buses Inc., The Trust for Public Land, Vulcan Construction Materials LP, and the Williams Companies. | | | | |
| **Franklin Freeman,**<br>the Governor's Senior Assistant for Governmental Affairs, representing Governor Mike Easley as lead legislative liaison. | | 10 | 26 | 7 |
| **Daniel Gerlach,**<br>then representing the Budget and Tax Center within the N.C. Justice and Community Development Center, now the Senior Policy Advisor for Fiscal Affairs for Governor Mike Easley. | | 11 | n/a | n/a |
| **Paula A. Wolf,**<br>representing the Covenant with North Carolina's Children. | | 12 | 18 | n/a |
| **Marvin D. Musselwhite, Jr.,**<br>of the Raleigh office of the law firm of Poyner & Spruill, representing Check Into Cash Inc. (MultiState Associates), ElectriCities of NC Inc., EzGov, Goodyear Tire & Rubber (MultiState Associates), ING America Insurance Holdings Inc., Johnson Controls Inc., Lexmark International Inc., Martin Marietta Materials Inc., Merck-Medco Managed Care LLC, N.C. Assn. of Nonprofit Homes for the Aging, N.C. Assn. of Textile Services, N.C. Enterprise Corp., N.C. Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, N.C. Orthopaedic Assn., SAP Public Sector & Education (MultiState Associates), SCI North Carolina Funeral Services, Inc., UST Public Affairs Inc., and WebMD. | | 13 | 11 | 10 |
| **Phillip J. Kirk, Jr.,**<br>representing North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry. | | 14 | 8 | 5 |
| **Deborah K. Ross,**<br>then representing the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina, and now a member of the N.C. House of Representatives. | | 15 | 22 | 37 |
| **Charles B. Neely, Jr.,**<br>of the Raleigh office of the law firm of Maupin, Taylor, & Ellis, representing Alcoa Inc., N.C. Hospital Assn., New Hanover Rent-A-Car Inc., and the Triangle Transit Authority. Volunteer Chairman, Citizens United Against the Lottery. | | 16 | n/a | n/a |

## Lobbyists in the 2001 N.C. General Assembly

| 1995–1996 | 1993–1994 | 1991–1992 | 1989–1990 | 1987–1988 | 1985–1986 | Former Legislator? | Lawyer? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 48 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | yes |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | no |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | no |
| 8 | 8 | 9 | 30 | n/a | n/a | yes | yes |
| 10 | 26 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | yes | no |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | no | yes |
| n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | yes | yes |

Karen Tam

***John McMillan, Kevin Howell, Jack Cozort, and Fred Mills discuss the issues of the day.***

*—continued from page 111*

Marvin D. Musselwhite, Jr. (13th); Charles B. Neely, Jr. (16th); and Samuel H. Johnson (30th). The three non-lawyer former legislators in the rankings are Roger W. Bone (3rd); Phillip J. Kirk, Jr. (14th); and Ann Q. Duncan (18th). One of the most influential lobbyists, Deborah Ross (15th), a lawyer who represented the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina last year, successfully ran for a seat in the N.C. House.

## Thirteen Newcomers in the Rankings

Thirteen lobbyists made their first appearance in the rankings this session, including one former legislator appearing for the first time, two women, and one African American. The lobbyists making their first appearances this year are: Dan Gerlach (11th); Charles B. Neely, Jr. (16th); Jeff Van Dyke (20th); Leon M. "Chip" Killian, III (32nd); Hugh H. Tilson, Jr. (33rd); William G. Scoggin (35th); G. Peyton Maynard (36th); Kevin Howell (40th); Henry Jones (42nd); Tony L. Adams (43rd); Leanne Winner (46th); Lisa Piercy (47th); and Kenneth Wright (48th). Kevin Howell, (40th), a legislative liaison for Governor Easley, is the second African American ever to be ranked among the most influential. Two lobbyists bounced back into the rankings after missing the list in 1999. Christopher A. Valauri (26th) of the N.C. Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association and S. Ellis Hankins (tie for 44th) of the N.C. League of Municipalities each has been ranked five times previously among the most influential lobbyists. Charles B. Neely, Jr. (16th), who resigned from the General Assembly in 1999 to make a bid for the Republican nomination for Governor, is the latest former legislator to make the rankings. Leanne Winner (46th), a lobbyist for the N.C. School Boards Association, and Lisa Piercy (47th), a contract lobbyist with The Capitol Group, are the two women who are newcomers to the rankings.

Significantly, even though the 13 lobbyists earning their first spot in the rankings are considered "newcomers" to the list of the most influential, each of them has many years of experience in politics and public affairs. "The people in this business that I admire have been good role models. They taught me it takes hard work, long hours, and ethical behavior," says Piercy.

## Technology Use

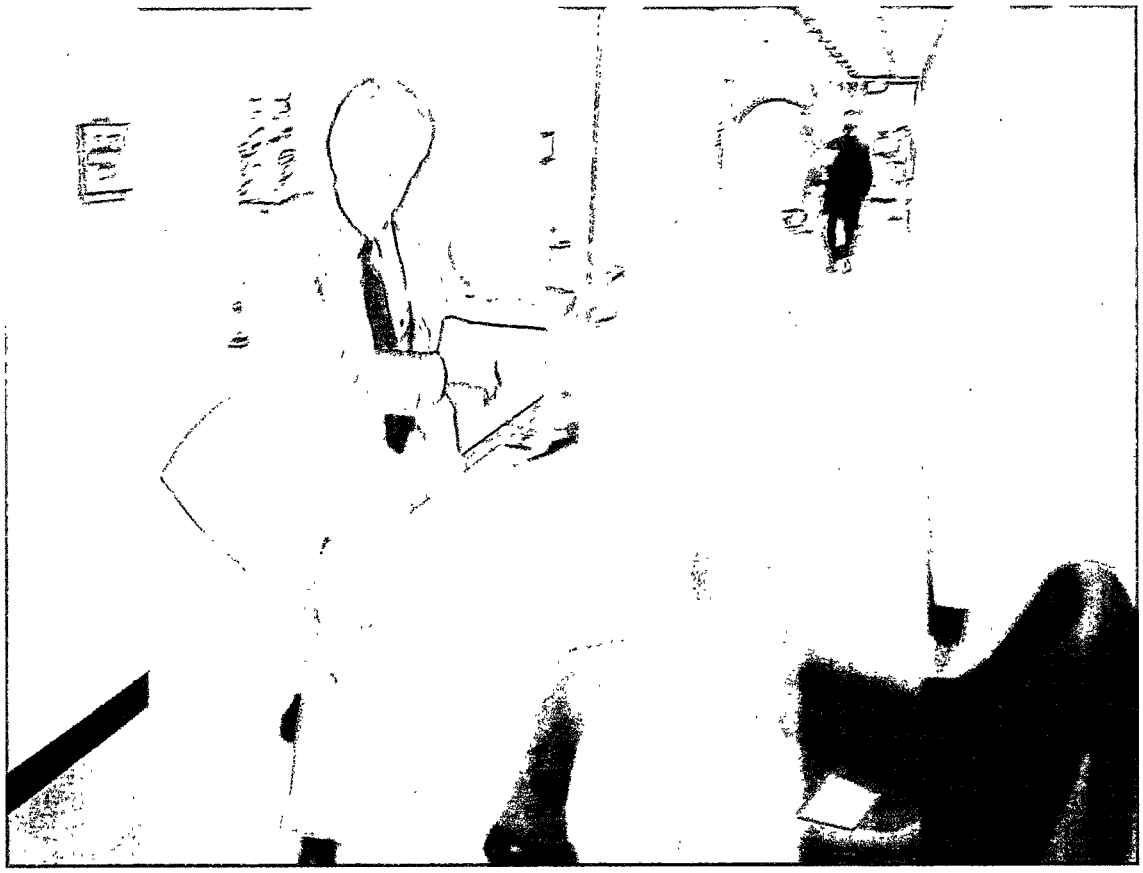
North Carolina's most influential lobbyists, or their staff, use a variety of technology-based tools in their lobbying practices. The use of two technological tools varied by age of the lobbyists. Lobbyists reporting use of wireless email devices and personal display adapters (PDAs) were significantly younger than lobbyists who didn't use these devices. "I've got more than 2,000 telephone numbers programmed into my PDA phone. When I need a constituent in a legislator's district, I can usually find someone," says Bill Brooks, who lobbies for the N.C. Family Policy Council and ranks 38th.

Influential lobbyists reported near unanimous use of email, online news, and mobile phones, as well as extraordinarily high levels of use of the legislature's website (http://www.ncleg.net), laptop computers, and the *Daily Bulletin* by email, produced by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Government (see Table 3, p. 121). Lobbyists also use email and fax alerts to their clients and even "cyber-lobbying" websites where a client's grassroots network contacts can learn more about pending legislation and appropriate arguments to use in support of or opposition to that legislation. These websites also can be used to automatically generate email or faxes to legislators from constituents. In their roles as information brokers, lobbyists use information technology tools to communicate more rapidly and stay on top of developments in the legislature. "I'm well-known as the Empress of Email," says Paula Wolf, who lobbies for the Covenant with North Carolina's

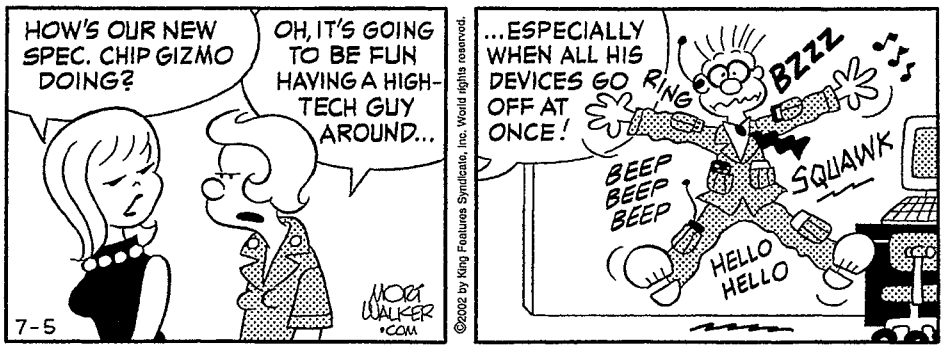
***"The world is governed by opinion."***

—THOMAS HOBBES, *ELEMENTS OF LAW NATURAL AND POLITIC, PART I, CHAPTER 12*

***Franklin Freeman (right) and Kevin Howell scramble to keep lawmakers from leaving a House Appropriations Committee meeting to avoid a vote on Gov. Easley's More-At-Four program.***



The News & Observer, *Raleigh, N.C.*




Children. "It's the most efficient way for me to communicate with people."

Many lobbyists interviewed by the Center emphasize that using high-tech communications gear to expedite their ability to keep abreast of events does not supplant personal contact with legislators as the most appropriate method to influence lawmakers' opinion. "[E]lectronic innovation will not replace personal contact with legislators as an effective means of communicating," says contract lobbyist John McMillan, who ranks eighth among the most influential lobbyists. McMillan says he carries as much high tech gear as "Chip Gizmo," the new character in the Beetle Bailey comic strip. Indeed, personal contact out-polled email, phone banks, and even ad campaigns as a means of swaying state lawmakers on the issues.

## Effective Citizen Methods for Contacting Legislators

Asked to rank the effectiveness of five alternative methods for citizens to use when contacting legislators, the lobbyists advise that "in person" is the most effective method, followed in order by telephone, U.S. mail, fax, and finally, email (see Table 4). Encouraging citizen contact of legislators can be a powerful tool for lobbyists. "Personal contact is effective," says lobbyist Harry Kaplan, a contract lobbyist representing nine clients. "I've seen legislation based on a single conversation between one constituent and a legislator." Kaplan believes that legislators enjoy sincere personal contact from citizens and that personal contact on issues is not as common as people generally presume.

Since many legislators' offices check first to see if the citizen contacting them is a constituent, most lobbyists say grassroots tactics that encourage non-constituents to communicate with legislators are ineffective. A novel approach to creating constituent contact is inviting legislators to visit or tour a client(s) facility or program, thereby setting the stage for grassroots "in-person" contact during and after the visit. Harry Kaplan, for one, believes these site visits are an excellent approach. "Legislators like it, because they want to be known in their district, and it makes your facility real to them."

***"Personal contact is effective. I've seen legislation based on a single conversation between one constituent and a legislator."***

—HARRY KAPLAN, CONTRACT LOBBYIST

## Factors in Determining a Lobbyist's Effectiveness

The Center asked influential lobbyists to rank the importance of four specific factors in determining a lobbyist's effectiveness. The lobbyists placed the ability to communicate accurate information as the most important of the four factors ranked, followed by a client's grassroots potential, a client's political or economic clout, and the ability to make or direct political campaign contributions (see Table 5, p. 123). Even lobbyists that have clients with PACs say the ability to make or direct campaign contributions is less important than other factors in evaluating a lobbyist's effectiveness.

Mike Carpenter, who lobbies for the N.C. Homebuilders Association, a group with a PAC that consistently places near the top in money donated to N.C. legislative campaigns, agrees that campaign contributions are not the most important factor in gaining influence. "Too often, there is too much focus on political contributions as an explanation for legislative behavior," Carpenter says.

## Table 3. Use of Technology by N.C.'s Most Influential Lobbyists.

**As a part of your lobbying practice, which of the following technologies do you or your staff regularly use in lobbying the legislature?**

| Technological Tools | % Use | % Don't Use | Number of Respondents (n) out of 48 Most Influential Lobbyists |
|---|---|---|---|
| Email? | 100.0 | 0.0 | 42 |
| An online or email daily news summary? | 100.0 | 0.0 | 40 |
| Cellular or mobile telephone? | 97.6 | 2.4 | 42 |
| N.C General Assembly's web site? | 92.9 | 7.1 | 42 |
| Institute of Government's *Daily Bulletin* by email? | 69.0 | 31.0 | 42 |
| Notebook, laptop, or portable computer? | 50.0 | 50.0 | 38 |
| Personal display adapter or handheld computer? | 36.6 | 63.4 | 41 |
| Pager?* | 34.2* | 65.8 | 38 |
| Wireless email device? | 28.9 | 71.1 | 38 |

* A number of respondents pointed out that current mobile phone technology obviates the need for pagers.

## Table 4. Ranking of Effectiveness of Alternative Methods for Citizens To Use When Contacting Legislators

**Please rank the effectiveness of these methods for *citizens* to use in contacting their legislators from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most effective and 5 is the least effective. Please use each number (1–5) only once.**

| Method | Rank of Effectiveness | Average Effectiveness (Mean) | Number of Respondents (n) out of 48 Most Influential Lobbyists |
|---|---|---|---|
| In person | 1 | 1.10 | 42 |
| Telephone | 2 | 2.31 | 42 |
| U.S. mail | 3 | 3.21 | 42 |
| Fax | 4 | 4.07 | 41 |
| Email | 5 | 4.29 | 41 |

***"When spider webs unite, they can halt even a lion."***

—AFRICAN PROVERB

Carpenter acknowledges that campaign cash is an important and useful part of his organization's efforts, but believes that the strength of their lobbying communications, the depth of their grassroots organization, and the economic and political clout of their clients are, by far, more important when it comes to persuading a lawmaker.

## What Makes a Lobbyist Influential?

In two open-ended questions where respondents were asked what makes a lobbyist effective or ineffective, most responses centered on credibility, honesty, and personal integrity of the lobbyist (see Table 6, p. 124).

Since lobbying involves developing personal relationships with lawmakers, lobbyists are quick to point out that they become, in effect, policy advisors to whom legislators turn for understanding of competing arguments. Lobbyists say guarding that relationship with legislators means that they must be able to present competing views objectively. "In public policy issues, there are always at least two points of view," says Carpenter. "It's important for a lobbyist to present the full picture."

## Evaluation of Lobbying Techniques

The Center also asked the lobbyists to rate the effectiveness of 12 different lobbying tactics (see Table 7, p. 125). The three tactics they rated most effective are meeting with legislators, using a coalition approach to lobbying where different groups coordinate their advocacy, and establishing a statewide grassroots network that may be activated to contact legislators. Since respondents were asked to judge the effectiveness of tactics even if they had not used them, the Center was able examine whether lobbyists have different opinions based on whether they have used a particular tactic. Interestingly, lobbyists who have used automated telephone banks to connect constituents with legislators or to encourage constituents to call legislators rated those two tactics

***Contract lobbyist John McMillan (right) with former Sen. Aaron Plyler (D-Union)***

*Karen Tam*

## Table 5. Ranking of Factors in Determining a Lobbyist's Effectiveness

**Please rank the importance of these four factors in determining a *lobbyist's* effectiveness from 1 to 4, where 1 is most important and 4 is the least important. Please use each number (1-4) only once.**

| | Rank of Effectiveness | Average Ranking of Item (Mean) | Number of Respondents (n) out of 48 Most Influential Lobbyists |
|---|---|---|---|
| The ability to communicate accurate information on the legislation in question. | 1 | 1.90 | 41 |
| A client which has constituents in almost all 100 counties who can contact their legislators. | 2 | 2.20 | 40 |
| Political or economic clout of client(s). | 3 | 2.44 | 41 |
| The ability to make or direct campaign contributions. | 4 | 3.22 | 41 |

as significantly more effective than lobbyists who have not used them. Additionally, contract lobbyists—those who are engaged by a variety of clients rather than primarily employed by a single client—reported using a wider variety of tactics than single-client lobbyists.

Many lobbyists view the new technologies as a supplement to, but not a substitute for, traditional lobbying. Roger Bone, who has ranked among the top 14 lobbyists for sixteen years since leaving the legislature, welcomes the use of innovative influence techniques, but only in the context of supporting the efforts of a lobbyist. "I always tell my clients, I'm the quarterback, and they are the team," says Bone. "I can call the plays, but if they can deliver in the game too—we can win a lot more easily."

## Lobbyists Add Voter Polling to Repertoire

Several lobbyists report that commissioning a poll of voters can help a lobbyist discuss the politics of an issue with legislators. Because of heightened party competition during the 1990s with the resulting near parity between Democrats and Republicans in the General Assembly, legislators are more sensitive to election-year politics and have a deeper understanding of the value of polling. So-called "leadership PACs," partisan election campaign committees controlled by the leaders of each chamber and each party, frequently share polling data with members of the legislature on hot issues that could potentially impact the outcome of legislative elections. For example, employees of the Democratic state House leadership PAC shared polling data with legislators in 2001 suggesting that raising taxes would not be a politically popular move, but that holding a referendum on a state lottery would be.

While some lobbyists privately grouse that it's inappropriate for partisan staff members of the leadership PACs to be so deeply involved in the policy-making process, others accept the caucus polling. "Polling is a part of lobbying now. If your issue has election implications for legislators, you had better understand those implications," says Roger Bone. "If someone else has polled on your issue, you have to respond in kind so they don't know more than you do."

***"To the man who only has a hammer in the toolkit, every problem looks like a nail."***

—ABRAHAM MASLOW

## Changes in the Lobbying Profession Over the Last 10 Years

The most influential lobbyists also identified major changes in their environment over the last 10 years, including heightened party competition in legislative elections and the resulting near-parity between Democrats and Republicans in the legislature, the increased availability and use of information technology, the growing diversity in the lobbying corps and the increase in the sheer number of lobbyists. From the 1981 legislative session through the 1993 session, Republican-held seats in the General Assembly ranged from a low of 14 percent to a high of 35 percent. In 1995 and 1997, Republicans held a majority of seats in the 120-member state House. Even though Democrats held majorities in the 1999 and 2001 sessions, Republican maintained enough seats to exert significant influence. In the state Senate, Republicans held 48

### Table 6. What Makes a Lobbyist Influential?—Selected Verbatim Responses by N.C.'s Most Influential Lobbyists.

| Factors Increasing Influence | Factors Decreasing Influence |
|---|---|
| ■ Credibility, based on knowledge, integrity, political savvy, and perceived influence of the clients represented. | ■ Lack of reputation for integrity. |
| ■ Hard work. Work at it hard to gain trust of legislators and to know what you are talking about. Never lie, even if the truth hurts. Trust and a good relationship are the keys. | ■ Lying, misleading, or misrepresenting facts. |
| ■ Integrity. Ability to frame issues and provide concise explanation. | ■ Getting involved in partisan issues. |
| ■ Knowing the issues (both sides) and giving accurate information to legislators; establishing close personal relationships with legislators and respecting their opinions and political situation; working for an organization with a combination of political, economic or grassroots clout; having a congenial personality; good relationship with press and legislative staff. | ■ Trying to "muscle" legislators or being a pest.<br>■ Blindsiding a legislator. |
| ■ Ability and willingness to give contributions and raise money for legislators. | ■ A lobbyist who cannot or will not respond to requests for contributions will eventually be hurt. |
| ■ Developing a rapport over time with a multitude of members; working well with not just one political party; honesty; knowing your issues and being able to communicate effectively. | ■ "In your face" style of aggressive lobbying. |

## Table 7. Evaluation of Lobbying Techniques Used by 48 Most Influential Lobbyists

**Please indicate whether you, your clients, or your employer(s) have used any of the following techniques as a part of a lobbying effort involving the N.C. General Assembly. Then, please rate the persuasiveness of the techniques on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not effective at all and 10 is extremely effective. Please give your opinion on the effectiveness of each technique, even if you have not personally used it.**

| % Have Used | % Have Not Used | Rank of Effectiveness | Average Effectiveness (Mean) | Number of 48 Responding to to Whether They've Used Technique | Number of 48 Responding to Whether Technique Is Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personally meeting with legislators in their offices or in an informal setting, such as over a meal. | | | | | |
| 100.0 | 0.0 | 1 | 8.83 | 42 | 42 |
| Using a coalition approach to lobbying, where multiple organizations join forces on an issue and coordinate action. | | | | | |
| 100.0 | 0.0 | 2 | 8.60 | 41 | 42 |
| Establishing a statewide grassroots network to contact legislators when prompted. | | | | | |
| 90.2 | 9.8 | 3 | 8.15 | 41 | 39 |
| Using a team approach to lobbying, where one (or more) member(s) of a team of lobbyists lobbies Democrats, and other(s) Republicans. | | | | | |
| 63.4 | 36.6 | 4 | 6.97 | 41 | 33 |
| Using a team approach to lobbying, where one (or more) member(s) of a team of lobbyists lobbies the House, and other(s) the Senate. | | | | | |
| 63.4 | 36.6 | 5 | 6.88 | 41 | 32 |
| Using a team approach to lobbying, where one (or more) member(s) of a team of lobbyists lobbies a specific caucus or demographic group, such as women or African American legislators. | | | | | |
| 53.7 | 46.3 | 6 | 6.59 | 41 | 29 |
| Hiring a public relations firm or a political campaign consultant to coordinate legislative strategy or message. | | | | | |
| 61.0 | 39.0 | 7 | 6.15 | 41 | 33 |
| Providing a legislator with a copy of an op-ed (opinion editorial) from a newspaper or magazine by a respected community or state leader. | | | | | |
| 87.8 | 12.2 | 8 | 5.63 | 41 | 40 |
| Buying TV, radio, or print advertising to promote your cause. | | | | | |
| 42.9 | 57.1 | 9 | 5.47 | 42 | 32 |
| Using a professional telephone bank with live operators to automatically connect constituents with a legislator by telephone. | | | | | |
| 33.3 | 66.7 | 10 | 5.21 | 42 | 28 |
| Using an automated telephone bank to connect constituents with a legislator by telephone. | | | | | |
| 21.4 | 78.6 | 11 | 4.32 | 42 | 22 |
| Using an automated telephone bank to encourage a legislators' constituents to contact the legislator by telephone. | | | | | |
| 17.5 | 82.5 | 12 | 4.10 | 40 | 20 |

## Table 8. Selected Verbatim Responses on Changes in Lobbying Over the Last 10 Years

- Changes every four years in Speaker/leadership; closer numbers, especially in the House, where one cannot simply lobby the leadership.
- Lobbyists must now deal with legislators from both parties and with the various factions within each party, while in the past, North Carolina was a one-party state, and the members of the minority party were frequently ignored. There is much more reliance on "The Caucus" and many more "caucus issues" and caucus meetings to try to iron out issues in private.
- Legislators [are] being influenced by polls and consultants and worrying too much about re-election. Prior to 1990s, there were members who were guided more about doing what was good for N.C. despite the criticism they might get.
- Technology has had the most influence via e-mail and the Internet; the increased sophistication by using such techniques as patch-calling from constituents to members.
- The amount of money required for campaigns and the resulting expectation [of campaign contributions] to the candidate/legislator.
- There are more women lobbyists. There are two political parties. Women can wear pants now.

## Table 9. What To Expect in the Future: Verbatim Responses from Lobbyists

- Continued advances in electronic communication and related devices; increased number of lobbyists as more and more groups and entities seek to influence the political process; greater availability of services specialized to aid in lobbying and grassroots contact.
- Lobbying will require more PAC money and personal money if you are to have influence; more sophisticated lobbying teams with allied grassroots efforts.
- More and more technology. Presently, my time in Appropriations and Finance [Committees] have been reduced by using audio on General Assembly website. Predict [other] committee meetings will be on audio soon.
- More PAC money.
- Unless there are changes of some kind in the future, I regret that the influence of fundraising will become more and more dominant in dealing with the legislative process. Demographic changes in North Carolina will also influence the legislative process. "Team Lobbying" in order to take advantage of political, ethnic and other distinctions will grow as a practice. The length of the sessions will probably continue to grow, unless session limits are enacted, which will increase the use of full-time lobbyists rather than part-time lobbyists or lobbyists who include lobbying as a mere portion of their other professional practices.
- With a closer balance between Democrats and Republicans, it becomes increasingly difficult to pass controversial legislation. Defense becomes easier the closer we get to parity.
- More use of technology, more emphasis on campaign contributions, unless and until we have meaningful campaign finance reform.

Karen Tam

***Paula Wolf consults with Rep. Debbie Clary, R-Cleveland, in Wolf's role as chief lobbyist for the Covenant with North Carolina's Children.***

percent of the seats in 1995 and 40 percent in the 1997 session. And, even though they only held 30 percent of the seats in 1999 and 2001, they still held more seats than any time between 1981 and 1993. In the 2002 election, Republicans retook the House by a 61–59 margin[3] and gained ground in the Senate, closing to within six seats of Democrats, 28–22.

As one lobbyist completing the survey wrote, "Lobbyists must now deal with legislators from both parties and with the various factions within each party, while in the past, North Carolina was a one-party state, and the members of the minority party were frequently ignored. There is much more reliance on 'The Caucus' and many more 'caucus issues' and caucus meetings to try to iron out issues in private." (See Tables 8 and 9 for more verbatim responses from the survey.)

Several facts document the growth in the sheer number of lobbyists. The number of *lobbyists* registered at the end of each long session has grown by 18 percent since the 1993 session, according to data compiled by the Center. Similarly, the number of lobbying *clients* registered at the end of the 2001 session was 20 percent higher than the Center found in 1993. Moreover, as of the end of August 2002, the N.C Secretary of State's office had registered 28 percent more lobbying clients for all of the 2001–02 session than they had registered for the entire 1993–94 legislative session.

## What To Expect in the Future

As for the future, North Carolina's most influential lobbyists anticipate increased demand that lobbyists participate in political campaign fundraising, increased diversity in the lobbying corps, and increased use of information technology in the legislative process. Campaign finance reform advocates often have pointed out the increasing cost of running for a seat in the N.C. Legislature. Analysts who track campaigns believe the trend will likely continue as long as the political parties in the state remain near parity in their ability to elect candidates. "In business, competition drives costs down. In campaigns, competition drives costs up," says John N. Davis, who tracks campaigns for a pro-business research group called NCFREE.

The North Carolina General Assembly itself has seen a slow but steady increase in the number of women and minorities. Many lobbyists believe


***Opponents of an increase in the beer tax distributed stickers such as this one to retail outlets across North Carolina to generate grassroots opposition to a proposed tax hike.***

this trend also will show up in the lobbying corps as interest groups hire people who can more easily relate to a diverse legislature. Mike Carpenter says, "As diversity increases in the legislature, that will be reflected in the lobbying corps." Paula Wolf says, "There are more women lobbyists. There are two political parties. Women can wear pants now."

The fundamentals of lobbying remain unchanged. Making personal contact with legislators and communicating credible information are still judged to be the most useful. But though they say the oldest tools in the lobbyists' toolbox are still the best, lobbyists believe the use of technology will continue to increase. James Sexton, the president of a telephone contact company, agrees. "We're figuring out new ways to use telecommunication tools every day," says Sexton. "As quick as the telecom industry can develop a new tool, we put it to use as an influence technique."

## Conclusion

While the most influential lobbyists reported extensive use of new technologies, they believe that the most effective lobbying technique is still developing personal relationships with lawmakers and providing timely, credible information. The lobbyists' responses to three major questions on the survey summarize this lesson in advocacy. Effective lobbyists believe meeting face-to-face beats any other means of swaying a lawmaker on an issue. They believe lawmakers value accurate information over spin and arm-twisting. And, they believe the same methods that work for them in influencing legislators are the right tools for the average citizen if he or she has a concern about an issue. In-person contact remains the best means of influencing legislators.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] The Center last examined use of technology in the state's lobbying corps in Mebane Rash Whitman, "Lobbyists Bearing High-Tech Gadgets, and Other Tales from the Latest Lobbying Rankings," *North Carolina Insight*, Volume 15, No. 4/Volume 16, No. 1, March 1995, pp. 88–97.

[2] The Center defines a public interest lobby as one which seeks a collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership of the organization. This definition excludes groups which engage in some public interest lobbying but have as their primary purpose the benefit and protection of their membership. The Center defines a contract lobbyist as an individual who is engaged by a number of clients, rather than primarily employed by a single client or interest group.

[3] Rep. Michael Decker was elected as a Republican but later switched his party affiliation to Democrat, creating a 60-60 tie in the House.

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