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Effect of Co-Speakers and Role of Freshmen Are Keys to Legislature This Year

North Carolina's experiment with Co-Speakers in the state House of Representatives and the large number of freshman lawmakers are the key developments in the legislature so far this year, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research in a new study released today. The Center's new guide to the state legislature shows five ways in which the Co-Speakers are changing the legislature as an institution, and the 36 new faces in the House and 15 new state Senators are playing surprisingly important roles in votes on the state budget and other policy issues.

The Center timed its analysis of the legislature to coincide with the halfway point of the legislative session. By the end of last week, the state budget had cleared both the House and Senate chambers, the major deadlines for introducing legislation had passed, and the date by which legislation must pass through one chamber to stay alive had come and gone.

"The two biggest developments in the legislature so far this year have been the bipartisan coalition that resulted in Co-Speakers and the surprising role being played by freshmen legislators in the House in supporting the Co-Speaker arrangement and the House budget," says Ran Coble, the Center's director.

Effects of the Co-Speaker Arrangement on the Legislature

The legislative session began on January 29 with Democrats and Republicans each holding 60 seats in the state House, but a coalition of 60 Democrats and 29 Republicans voted 89-31 for Democrat Jim Black and Republican Richard Morgan as Co-Speakers, who now preside on alternate days. The Center says this coalition and the Co-Speaker arrangement have led to the following developments in the legislature as an institution:

- The House reduced the number of committees from 48 in the 2001-2002 session, the second highest number of committees in the nation, to 41 committees this year. The Co-Speakers abolished nine committees, including two Appropriation subcommittees and committees on Cultural Resources, Highway Safety, Mental Health, State Personnel, and Travel and Tourism. They also created a new Occupational Safety and Health Committee, as well as a fourth Judiciary Committee.
- Despite reducing the number of House committees, the Co-Speakers appointed the same number of Committee chairs as last session. The Co-Speakers gave out 78 gavels, the same as in 2001-2002, which was the most of any legislature in the country. Nineteen House committees have two co-chairs, two House committees have four co-chairs, the Finance Committee has six co-chairs, and the Appropriations Committee has eight co-chairs. This year, as in previous Center surveys of legislators, lobbyists, and capital news media, the Appropriations and Finance Committees were named as the most powerful committees. In each of the House committees with co-chairs, Republicans and Democrats evenly divide the co-chairmanships.

■ The House Co-Speaker arrangement and Republican gains in state Senate in the November 2002 election also led Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight to decrease the number of committees but increase the number of committee chairs. Ten Senate Committees have co-chairs. And, even though Democrats hold a 28-22 majority in the state Senate, five committees have Republican and Democrat co-chairs, and one Senate committee has a sole Republican as chair.

■ The coalition which supported the Co-Speaker arrangement held together through its first big test, adoption of the House version of the budget on April 17. Fourteen Republicans voted for both the Co-Speaker deal in January and for the House budget in April. All House Democrats except Rep. Mickey Michaux (and Rep. Martin Nesbitt, who was absent for the budget vote) voted for both the Co-Speaker arrangement and the budget.

■ The parity between the parties in House committee chairmanships also is reflected in the membership within each committee. All but three of the 41 House committees have equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats, which makes attendance at committee meetings crucial on legislation where party platforms differ.

For example, in a vote in the House Education Subcommittee on Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education on whether to raise the cap on the number of charter schools permitted from 100 to 110, the vote split along party lines. There are 10 Democrats and 10 Republicans on the committee. More Republicans were in attendance that day, so the bill received a favorable report.

However, the Co-Speakers also have taken steps to avoid partisan bickering in committees. One example of that came recently in a House committee meeting to select members of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. As Republican and Democrat legislators entered the room and began to take seats on opposite sides of the room, one Republican legislator admonished a fellow GOP lawmaker to mix up the seating "because the Speakers told us they didn't want us to sit by party."

"The Co-Speaker arrangement has worked well so far to build a new spirit of bipartisanship to solve problems," says the Center's Coble. He adds, "Co-Speakers Black and Morgan trust each other and have shared the limelight and the tough decisions equally. But passage of the House budget is only the first of several tests." Coble says future votes on the budget when it emerges from conference committee and possible votes on tax increases, redistricting, and video poker also may be tough tests ahead for the Co-Speakers.

The Surprisingly Important Role of Freshmen This Year

Over the last 20 years, the Center's guide to the legislature says turnover in the legislature has averaged about a fourth of the House and a fifth of the Senate in each two-year election cycle. This year, however, 30 percent, or 51 of the 170 legislators are new and did not serve in the previous legislative session.

"Usually, freshman lawmakers are told it's best to be seen but not heard," say the Center's Coble. "But this year, the sheer size of the freshman class gives them extra clout, and the division within the Republican caucus is negating the normal command and control that party caucuses exercise over first-termers.

The Center notes three additional ways in which the new legislators are exercising influence in the legislature:

■ Five freshman lawmakers are serving as committee chairs or co-chairs, which is highly unusual. Senator Cecil Hargett chairs a Senate Select Committee on Military Affairs, while Representatives Carolyn

Justus, Don Munford, Louis Pate, and Paul Stam lead House committees on Health, Judiciary IV, Ways and Means, and Elections Laws and Campaign Finance Reform, respectively. However, Pate and Stam have served in the legislature before – in 1995 and 1989, respectively.

■ The freshmen have formed their own caucus, which meets every Monday. They also meet regularly with the Speakers. This access to the House leadership contributes to the unusual amount of clout freshmen have this year.

■ The freshmen also were key parts of the coalition that put the Co-Speakers in power and passed the House budget. Of the 29 Republicans who voted for the Co-Speaker arrangement, 10 are freshmen, and of the 17 Republicans who voted for the House budget package, eight are freshmen. At key moments in the House debate on the budget, Republican first-termers Michael Gorman and Keith Williams spoke in favor of the bill, as did Democrat freshmen Earl Jones and Ray Rapp.

Coble attributed the unusual influence of this year's class to three factors – the size of the class, the fact that many have experience governing at the local level, and lack of an ironclad contract or party platform that binds all to one set of issues and positions. Freshmen with local government experience include Representatives Becky Carney, Carolyn Justice, Earline Parmon, Karen Ray, and John Sauls, all of whom have served on county boards of commissioners, as have Senators Katie Dorsett, Robert Holloman, Vernon Malone, R.B. Sloane Jr., and Fred Smith. Representatives Alice Bordsen, Earl Jones, and John Rhodes have served on city councils, as have Senators Katie Dorsett and Tony Moore. Freshmen Representatives Lucy Allen, Phillip Frye, Michael Gorman, Bill McGee, Louis Pate, and Ray Rapp have served as mayors. Representative Bruce Goforth served on a school board, Senator Richard Stevens was a county manager, and Representative Skip Stam was a town attorney.

The largest freshman class prior to this year was in the 1995 General Assembly, when a total of 54 new members were elected. That year, the Republican Party put forward a 17-point Contract with the People of North Carolina that included an income tax cut, term limits, veto power for the governor, and voter initiative and referendum. The platform united Republicans in the legislature but allowed little room for other initiatives by freshmen that session. Thirty members of the 1995 freshmen class are no longer in the legislature.

Other Trends in the Legislature

Other trends in the legislature highlighted by the Center in its new legislative guide include:

- The number of women in the General Assembly this year (35) is an all-time high, eclipsing the old mark of 32 set in the 2001-2002 session.
- More than one-fourth (44) of the 170 legislators are retirees.
- Occupationally, the largest number (53) of legislators come from business or sales backgrounds, followed by lawyers (32) and educators (25), though many of the latter are retired from teaching or administration. The number of educators is on the rise, while the number of lawyers is declining.

These and other legislative trends can be found in *Article II: A Guide to the 2003-2004 North Carolina Legislature*. Authored by Center policy analyst Sam Watts, this citizens' guide contains profiles on each of the 170 members of the General Assembly, including photos; business and home addresses; telephone and fax numbers; counties in the districts they serve; number of terms served in the legislature; and each legislator's educational and occupational background. For members who served in the previous session, the guide lists for the 2001-2002 session five bills they introduced, their votes on 12 bills of statewide interest, and rankings of attendance and roll call voting participation, as well as a history of rankings of each legislator's effectiveness since 1981. These rankings are based on surveys of all legislators, registered lobbyists based in North Carolina,

and the capital news media. The latest set of legislative effectiveness rankings was released in May 2002. Also included are demographic and occupational trends for the General Assembly since 1983 and a list of the 48 most influential lobbyists.

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

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation that studies key public issues facing North Carolina and evaluates state government programs. The Center receives general operating support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, 11 other foundations, 160 corporate contributors, and almost 900 individual and organizational members across the state. In addition to publishing *Article II: A Guide to the 2003-2004 N.C. Legislature*, the Center also publishes *North Carolina Insight* magazine, book-length research reports, and textbooks for teachers who teach courses on state and local government. The Center recently has published studies on ways to improve voter participation and accuracy in counting votes, the pros and cons of state lotteries, and North Carolina's experience with charter schools. The Center currently is conducting studies on the governance of public universities and on family violence in North Carolina.

Copies of *Article II: A Guide to the 2003-2004 N.C. Legislature* and the *Supplement* with committee assignments are available for \$25 a set, which includes tax, postage, and handling. To order, write the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order through the Center's web site at <http://www.nccppr.org>.

For more information, contact Ran Coble, executive director, or Sam Watts, policy analyst, at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research at (919) 832-2839.

Trends in Legislative Demographics

Category	Year and Number of Members per Category										
	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
African Americans											
Senate	1	3	3	4	5	7	7	7	7	7	6
House	11	13	13	13	14	18	17	17	17	18	18
Total	12	16	16	17	19	25	24	24	24	25	24
percent	7%	9%	9%	10%	11%	15%	14%	14%	14%	15%	14%
Women											
Senate	5	4	4	4	5	7	6	6	7	5	7
House	19	16	20	21	20	24	22	23	24	27	28
Total	24	20	24	25	25	31	28	29	31	32	35
percent	14%	12%	14%	15%	15%	18%	17%	17%	18%	19%	21%
Native Americans											
Senate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
House	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
percent	0%	0%	0%	0%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.6%
Hispanics											
Senate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
House	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
percent	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.6%	1.2%
Democrats											
Senate	44	38	40	37	36	39	26	30	35	35	28
House	102	82	84	74	81	78	52	59	66	62	60
Total	146	120	124	111	117	117	78	89	101	97	88
percent	86%	71%	73%	65%	69%	69%	46%	52%	59%	57%	52%
Republicans											
Senate	6	12	10	13	14	11	24	20	15	15	22
House	18	38	36	46	39	42	68	61	54	58	60
Total	24	50	46	59	53	53	92	81	69	73	82
percent	14%	29%	27%	35%	31%	31%	54%	48%	41%	43%	48%
Turnover Ratio*											
Senate	9	18	6	5	8	10	15	11	7	5	15
percent	18%	36%	12%	10%	16%	20%	30%	22%	14%	10%	30%
House	31	39	25	25	21	42	39	22	16	15	36
percent	26%	33%	21%	21%	18%	35%	33%	18%	13%	13%	30%

* If a member served in the legislature during the immediate past session, he or she is not considered a new member. If a member served in either chamber during sessions prior to the immediate past session, however, he or she is considered a new member.

This research was drawn largely from editions of the North Carolina Manual and from information obtained from the House and Senate Principal Clerks, and does not reflect members who first reached the General Assembly by appointment to legislative vacancies caused by death or resignation.

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Trends in Legislators' Occupations

Occupation	Year and Number of Members per Category										
Senate	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
Bank/Financial	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	6	5
Business/Sales	19	21	19	15	16	12	15	14	15	13	12
Construction	3	2	1	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
Education	4	3	3	3	4	7	5	3	2	4	4
Farming	6	6	6	5	6	7	6	7	8	8	3
Health Care	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	4	3	4	4
Homemaker	4	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
Insurance	6	4	4	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	0
Law	14	17	21	20	17	18	16	19	19	21	15
Manufacturing	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minister	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Real Estate	8	8	6	6	6	4	6	7	4	3	6
Retired	6	6	4	6	6	8	7	8	10	9	11
Self-employed*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	5

House of Representatives											
Bank/Financial	3	3	0	0	0	4	2	3	2	7	8
Business/Sales	45	45	43	37	33	34	31	39	39	40	41
Construction	1	2	2	3	2	2	5	5	4	5	4
Education	10	15	12	7	15	14	14	8	8	19	21
Farming	24	16	12	8	11	12	10	8	8	8	5
Health Care	5	4	4	4	7	10	5	3	1	3	2
Homemaker	4	3	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	4	4
Insurance	6	10	10	8	12	9	10	8	9	9	6
Law	26	24	23	25	18	21	16	17	18	17	17
Legislator	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	3	3	5	4
Manufacturing	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	1
Minister	3	7	4	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	3
Real Estate	19	20	15	17	20	17	13	18	18	9	9
Retired	12	13	17	22	28	24	30	23	28	37	33
Self-employed*	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	5	4	10	8

Note: Some legislators list more than one occupation; thus, the total number of occupations may be higher than the actual number of members.

* Includes consultants

N.C. House of Representatives

Co-Speaker of the House: James B. Black (Democrat)

Co-Speaker of the House: Richard T. Morgan (Republican)

Democratic Leader: Joe Hackney

Democratic Whips: Beverly M. Earle, R. Philip Haire,
Marian McLawhorn, Paul Miller

Republican Leader: Joe Kiser

Republican Whip: Trudi Walend

Number of Representatives: 120

Length of Term: 2 years

Demographics:

Democrats:	60	(50%)
Republicans:	60	(50%)
Men:	92	(77%)
Women:	28	(23%)
Caucasian:	100	(83%)
African American:	18	(15%)
Native American:	1	(1%) (Sutton)
Hispanic:	1	(1%) (McComas)
Total New Members:	36	(30%)
New Members Serving First Term Ever:	32	(B. Allen, L. Allen, Blackwood, Bordsen, Carney, Daughtridge, Dickson, England, Farmer- Butterfield, Frye, Glazier, Goforth, Gorman, Harrell, Johnson, Jones, Justice, LaRoque, Lewis, McGee, McHenry, Moore, Munford, Parmon, Rapp, Ray, Rhodes, Ross, Sauls, Stiller, A. Williams, K. Williams)
Returning After Hiatus of One or More Terms:	3	(Pate, Stam, Wood)
Members Appointed to Fill Vacancy in Prior Session and Elected in 2002 to First Full Term in 2003:	1	(Justus)
Served in Senate in 2001-2002 Session:	0	
Most Terms in the House:	14	(Brubaker, Holmes)

N.C. Senate

President: Lt. Governor Beverly Eaves Perdue

President Pro Tempore: Marc Basnight

Deputy President Pro Tempore: Charlie S. Dannelly

Majority Leader: Tony Rand

Majority Whip: Jeanne Hopkins Lucas

Republican Leader: Patrick Ballantine

Deputy Republican Leader: James S. Forrester

Minority Whip: Fern Shubert

Deputy Minority Whip: Tom Apodaca

Number of Senators: 50

Length of Term: 2 years

Demographics:

Democrats: 28 (56%)

Republicans: 22 (44%)

Men: 43 (86%)

Women: 7 (14%)

Caucasian: 44 (88%)

African American: 6 (12%)

Native American: 0 (0%)

Hispanics: 1 (2%)

New Members: 15 (30%: Apodaca, Blake, Brock, Dorsett, Hargett, Holloman, Jenkins, Malone, Moore, Pittenger, Queen, Sloan, Smith, Stevens, Tillman)

Served in House in
2001-2002 Session: 1 (Shubert)

Returning After Hiatus of
One or More Terms: 0

Members Appointed to Fill
Vacancy in Prior Session
and Elected in 2002 to
First Full Term in 2003: 0

Most Terms in Senate: 14 (R. C. Soles, Jr.)