



# The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

*A voice for good government*

## Accomplishments in 2004

### Evaluating Government Performance

In August 2004, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research released a major study warning of a serious teacher shortage in North Carolina.

The Center said the state's rapidly increasing school-age population, efforts to reduce class size, and a 20 percent or more annual teacher turnover rate in some school districts will take the shortage to crisis proportions if the state does not act quickly to increase the supply of new teachers and retain more of the existing pool of teachers.

The Center's research showed turnover rates for each of the state's 115 city and county school systems for the last five years and the number of teachers produced by every public and private college or university in North Carolina. Currently, our public schools have 86,000 teachers. The state must hire about 10,000 teachers each year just to staff existing classrooms. Yet, all the state's public and private universities *combined* produce only about 3,100 teachers a year. Only 2,200 of these graduates end up teaching in North Carolina, and only about 1,400 are still teaching three years later.

The Center said the impending crisis is caused by three factors. First, the State Data Center estimates that North Carolina's school-age population will increase from 1.4 million in 2000 to 1.6 million by 2010, adding demand for about 1,000 teachers a year. Second, Gov. Mike Easley has successfully pushed for reductions in class size in kindergarten and in grades 1 to 3, creating demand for still more teachers. Third, the federal "No Child Left Behind" Act raises the bar by requiring "a highly qualified teacher in every classroom."

The Center found that there already are acute shortages in particular subjects and regions. The subject areas of greatest shortage are math, science, special education, and foreign languages. Teacher turnover was highest the last five years in (in order) the Hoke, Warren, Weldon City, Franklin, Edgecombe, Vance, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Tyrrell, Hertford, and Person county school systems.

The Center recommended that the Governor ask the Education Cabinet to make the teacher shortage its #1 priority and to set specific targets for increasing production of new teachers. And, the Center said the Cabinet and the General Assembly should address teacher shortages in the subjects and regions with the worst shortages. The Center's research on the teacher shortage received statewide news coverage in 79 newspaper articles and on 95 radio and 7 TV stations, including a statewide "Open/net" cable TV program in November.



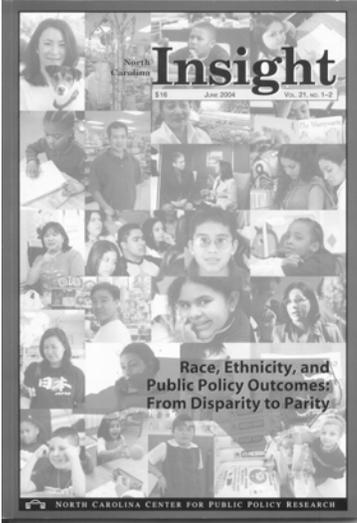
***"The Center is a tremendous resource for 'Open/net,' the statewide cable TV program produced by the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications. The Center's research not only helps citizens better understand how government works, but it also provides a valuable resource for evaluating how well it works. Their participation in our live call-in shows brings citizens into conversations about key public policy issues facing our state and helps raise the level of public debate."***

– Fred Hartman, Executive Director, N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications

## Conducting Nonpartisan Research on Public Policy Issues Facing North Carolina

In a report released as a theme issue of *Insight* in June, the Center examined racial disparities across a broad range of indicators. We found that North Carolina minorities trail whites in education, economic well-being, housing, voter participation, Internet access, health, and criminal justice outcomes. The Center's study offered a

series of eight specific recommendations to address these disparities.



Two newspapers called the report “unprecedented in scope,” as the Center’s study is the first known effort to focus on so many measures of racial and ethnic disparities in public policy outcomes in one report. The Center timed the release of its research to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which desegregated the nation’s public schools.

According to the U.S. Census, North Carolina’s population grew 21 percent from 6.6 million in 1990 to more than 8 million in 2000. The state’s population is now 72 percent white, 22 percent African American, 4.7 percent Hispanic, 1.4 percent Asian, and 1.2 percent Native American. The census indicates that all minorities combined now account for nearly a third (29 percent) of the state’s population. Between 1990 and 2000, the Asian population in the state grew by 128 percent. However, the Hispanic population grew by 394 percent, the largest percentage growth of any state in the country.

The Center examined what state government can or should do about differences such as these:

- **Income:** Per capita incomes for whites in 1999 averaged \$23,237. African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics earned as little as 48 percent of that amount at \$13,548, \$13,441, and \$11,097 respectively.
- **Poverty:** Additionally, 25 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, 23 percent of African Americans, and 21 percent of Native Americans live in poverty, compared to only 8 percent of whites.
- **Education:** Among whites, 81 percent are high school graduates, while 79 percent of Asians, 71 percent of African Americans, 63 percent of Native Americans, and 45 percent of Hispanics in North Carolina have graduated from high school.
- **Health:** In evaluating health status, the Center examined 30 different causes of disease or death. For example, African Americans and American Indians have higher rates of illness and death from heart disease, stroke, and diabetes than do whites. Latinos have higher rates of child fatalities, AIDS deaths, and teen pregnancies than whites. All are less likely than whites to have health insurance.

Despite the Center’s finding of disparities between whites and minorities across a broad range of indicators, the Center also found that all races and ethnicities fare well on some measures. African Americans, for example, have made the most economic progress and have the lowest percentage of high school students who smoke. Hispanics have the best infant mortality rates and lowest rates of heart disease and stroke. Native Americans do better on measures of teen pregnancy rates and deaths due to AIDS. Asians have the highest median household income and college completion rates, the best diet, and the lowest rates of colo-rectal and breast cancer deaths.

*“What’s important about the newest report by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is not that it found some disturbing racial disparities across a host of socioeconomic indicators. Nor is it the dramatic changes in the demographic challenges we face. What’s important is that the center used its findings on race, ethnicity, and public policy to focus on ways this state’s leaders can address these shortfalls and reduce the disparities that separate white North Carolinians from African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans here.”*

– The Charlotte Observer

## Enhancing Government Accountability

**Rankings of Legislators' Effectiveness, Attendance, and Roll Call Voting Participation** – In May, the Center continued to enhance government accountability and educate voters by publishing the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of rankings of the effectiveness of all 170 members of the N.C. General

Assembly. For only the second time, we added rankings of legislators based on their attendance and their participation in roll call votes. The attendance and voting participation rankings tell citizens and voters how often their legislator was there to represent them. The effectiveness rankings tell citizens how effective their legislator was when he or she was there. Both help citizens assess their legislators' performance.

*"The Center has received national praise for...the rankings. It's a real service to the citizens of the state."*

– The Transylvania Times

*"While the assessment isn't perfect, it provides a remarkably accurate picture of our lawmakers' abilities and work ethic...[T]he results give us good information about the people we send to Raleigh to represent us."*

– The Fayetteville Observer

**Rankings of the Most Influential Lobbyists** – In September, the Center released the 12th edition of *The Most Influential Lobbyists in the N.C. General Assembly*. Our mission includes educating the public on how the legislature works, and these rankings help citizens understand which key interests and organizations have clout with legislators. The rankings shed light on what is often an invisible process, and they also show changes and trends in the lobbying profession.

## Educating the Public

**Center Events Open to the Public** – On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Center held our biennial

public event, "An Evening with Four Political Campaign Consultants." The panel discussion featured two Democratic and two Republican campaign consultants – two who work nationally and two who work mainly in North Carolina.

The Democratic campaign consultants were Gary Pearce of Raleigh and Diane Feldman of Washington, DC. Pearce directed Jim Hunt's 1992 and 1996 campaigns for Governor and John Edwards' campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1998. Feldman is one of the nation's top women pollsters and political strategists. She was the consultant for Dan Blue's campaign for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate in 2002, and she handled nine states for the Clinton-Gore Presidential ticket in 1992.

The Republican campaign consultants were Neal Rhoades of Winston-Salem and Whit Ayres of Alexandria, VA. Rhoades was a consultant for Elizabeth Dole's campaign for the U.S. Senate in North Carolina in 2002. He also was southern political director for President George W. Bush in 2000. Ayres' clients include U.S. Senator Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. His analysis appears periodically in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and on CNN's "Inside Politics." Mack Lee of Time Warner's News 14 Carolina served as moderator.



This is the fifth event the Center has co-sponsored with the N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association and Time Warner Cable. The event was videotaped and shown on cable TV stations across the state at least 23 times from April through July.

## Board of Directors in 2004

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## Partnerships with the Media Get Our Research and Analysis to the Public

- In 2004, the Center's work received press coverage in 256 newspaper articles, 88 editorials, and at least 673 radio and 40 TV broadcasts.
- Center staff appeared 6 times on statewide public television and 3 times on statewide cable TV on the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications' "Open/net" program.
- We continued our monthly one-hour talk show on WPTF radio, our election-year analysis with the 90-station N.C. Radio News Network, and our work with the WUNC statewide public TV network. And, we forged a new relationship with *StateGovernmentRadio.com*.

## Looking Ahead to 2005

The Center already is hard at work to bring you new independent, nonpartisan research in 2005 on important public policy issues facing our state. Here is a preview:

**Domestic Violence in North Carolina** – Every day in North Carolina, there are 65 cases of domestic violence, and in about half of the cases, children also are abused. Between 40 and 60 percent of all calls to the police originate as domestic disputes. A third of the 911 calls to police are made by children. We'll look at the issue of domestic violence and its effect on the well-being of children.

**Higher Education Governance** – The third in our series of four Center reports on governance of higher education in North Carolina will begin with a brief history of the UNC Board of Governors and then examine the selection of Board members by the General Assembly. It also will look closely at the balance of powers between the UNC Board of Governors and the 16 campus Boards of Trustees. As with all our reports, the Center will discuss advantages and disadvantages of North Carolina's approach and of alternative approaches to our system of governance.

**Citizen's Guide to the Legislature** – In 2005, we'll publish the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of *Article II: A Guide to the 2005-2006 N.C. Legislature*, the most comprehensive legislative guide available. *Article II* contains biographical and voting information for each of the 170 legislators, as well as their committee assignments and the counties in their districts. For legislators who served in the previous session, the guide will list five bills they introduced in 2003-2004, their votes on 12 bills of statewide interest, their rankings of attendance and roll call voting participation, and a history of their effectiveness rankings.

## Your Ideas

We welcome your suggestions for topics on which the Center's independent, nonpartisan research would make a difference. To make a suggestion or order a publication, please write us at **P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27601**, call us at **(919) 832-2839**, fax to **(919) 832-2847**, or visit our Web site at [www.nccppr.org](http://www.nccppr.org).

## Our Mission

*The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to the goals of a better-informed public and more effective, accountable, and responsive government. The Center identifies public policy issues facing North Carolina and enriches the dialogue among citizens, the media, and policymakers. Based on its research, the Center makes recommendations for improving the way government serves the people of this state.*