



N.C. CENTER FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY  
RESEARCH

# From The Center Out

*The Newsletter of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research ... A voice for good government  
October-November-December 2005*

## CENTER RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE YIELDS LEGISLATIVE ACTION, NATIONAL AWARD, AND STATEWIDE CABLE TV SHOW

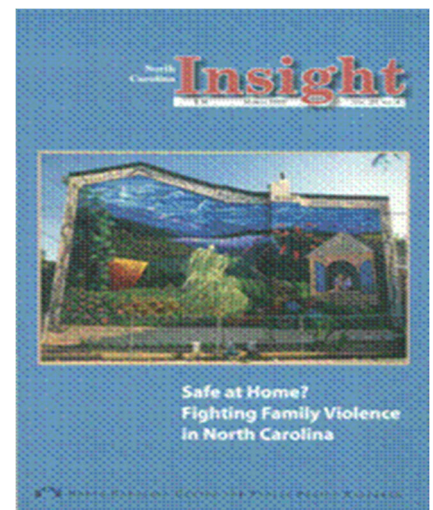
Earlier this year, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research released a major study of domestic violence, and that study now has yielded legislative action on our recommendations, won a national award, and served as the subject of a statewide cable TV program. The Center's research documented more than 70 domestic-related murders a year for the last three years, gave conviction rates for domestic violence charges in all 100 N.C. counties, accounted for all state funding in the field, listed major private foundation and corporate funders, listed programs available to victims in all 100 counties, and showed where gaps in services exist in shelters, abuser treatment programs, family courts, and child visitation and exchange centers.

We also made nine policy recommendations, and we are pleased that the 2005 General Assembly already enacted two of these recommendations into law this past legislative session. After the authorization for the N.C. House Select Committee on Domestic Violence expired, we recommended that a new joint House and Senate study commission be established, and the 2005 legislature did just that. This will continue the excellent bipartisan work of the House Select Committee and get more Senators informed and involved as well. The new study commission will make recommendations to the 2007 General Assembly.

The legislature also responded to our recommendation that family courts be expanded statewide. Family courts currently exist in only eight judicial districts in 16 counties. Family court judges have the power to handle the wide range of legal issues associated with domestic violence, including child abuse and neglect charges, the violence itself, substance abuse, child custody and visitation rights, and divorce. The 2005 legislation says, "The Administrative Office of the Courts shall expand the Family Court model to additional jurisdictions of the State, as resources allow...."

In addition to these legislative victories, the Center's study of domestic violence also won a national award from the Governmental Research Association (GRA), a group of 29 nonprofit policy groups in about 20 states. The Center won the GRA's 2005 award for producing the policy study that best educates the public.

Finally, the domestic violence study was the subject of an "Open/net" program broadcast statewide on cable TV. "Open/net" is produced by the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications. The program aired on August 2. Mike McLaughlin of the Center's *North Carolina Insight* was a panelist on the program, along with Rep. Wilma Sherrill (R-Buncombe), Sen. Janet Cowell (D-Wake), and Pitt County Assistant District Attorney Joe Bowman.



## OTHER CENTER SUCCESSES IN IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY

### 1. More Floodplain Maps Completed and Funded

A total of 83 of 100 counties in North Carolina now have floodplain maps completed or funded following the Center's push for statewide mapping as a key way to mitigate flood damage from hurricanes and to direct development away from flood-prone areas. Floodplains change over time, and many citizens who need flood insurance don't have it because they don't even know that they live or work in flood-prone areas. After Hurricane Floyd, the state moved to produce new floodplain maps for eastern counties. Then, after hurricanes devastated mountain areas in 2004, maps were authorized for the western counties. As a result, floodplain maps have been completed for 60 counties, and 23 more western counties received funding to complete floodplain maps as part of the Hurricane Recovery Act passed by the 2005 legislature.

### 2. Actions To Address the State's Teacher Shortage

In August 2004, the Center produced a major study showing that the state faced a growing teacher shortage due to the state's rapidly growing population, efforts to reduce class size, a 12.5 percent annual teacher turnover rate, and a new federal requirement under the No Child Left Behind law for a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom. The state is going to have to hire about 10,000 teachers each year, yet all the state's public and private universities *combined* produce only about 3,100 teachers a years. And, only 2,200 of these end up teaching in North Carolina.

In his February 2005 State of the State Address, Gov. Mike Easley adopted our goals in addressing the teacher shortage. On statewide TV in front of both chambers of the legislature, Easley said, "[R]ight now, we only produce one-third of the teachers we need." He announced a plan to have the university system partner with the community college system to "increase the number of new teachers by 64 percent each year." Thus, the *Center not only put this issue on the public agenda, but also elicited concrete action to address the problem.* We are pleased to say that the 2005 General Assembly enacted Easley's plan as part of the state budget. Called the 2+2 Program, the University of North Carolina and Community College systems are charged with increasing the number of teacher education graduates.



## EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA: A FOLLOW-UP REPORT

In the next edition of *North Carolina Insight*, the Center will return to the topic of a 2001 theme issue, the embattled economy of Eastern North Carolina. "We decided to return to the eastern region for three reasons," says *Insight's* Mike McLaughlin. "First, the East still lags on a broad range of indicators, from poverty, to education levels of its citizens, to having the infrastructure needed to grow. Second, the agricultural economy so important to the East has been roiled by change, including larger and fewer farms and the buyout of the federal tobacco program. Finally, the role of the military is changing, with the East largely escaping the latest base closures but not immune to future cuts." All of these issues have huge implications for the state's poorest third, the 41 counties comprising Eastern North Carolina.

Agriculture is not as strong as it once was, but still very important to the Eastern North Carolina economy. Where tobacco once reigned, almost a quarter of the state's \$6.9 billion in cash receipts from farming came from hog farming alone. The state's major hog-farming operations are centered in Eastern North Carolina, with 40 percent of the state's hogs produced in Duplin and Sampson counties. The movement is toward larger and fewer farms. From 1974 to 2004, the number of North Carolina farms decreased by 58 percent, while the size of these farms increased by 57 percent.

The non-agricultural economy in the East represents a broad mix of private and public sector employment. The service sector is the leading source of private sector jobs, employing three of four workers. The region has some high value-added manufacturers such as Nucor Steel in Hertford County, but also has several counties where Wal-Mart is the largest private employer and several where the leading private employers are low-skill, low-wage plants. Manufacturing represents only 12.9 percent of the work force in Eastern North Carolina, compared to 15.6 percent for the state as a whole. Public employment, on the other hand, is higher in the East, providing 23.7 percent of the region's jobs compared to 17.7 percent statewide. In Wayne County, for example, Wayne Memorial Hospital employs more workers than any private sector employer, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base is in the top five. Together, Pitt County Memorial Hospital and East Carolina University dwarf any private employer in Pitt County, and the U.S. Department of Defense is the leading employer in three counties. The bottom line is that different approaches to economic development may be necessary for different regions of the state. Look for more on Eastern North Carolina in the next issue of *Insight*.

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