



# The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

*A voice for good government*

## Accomplishments in 2006

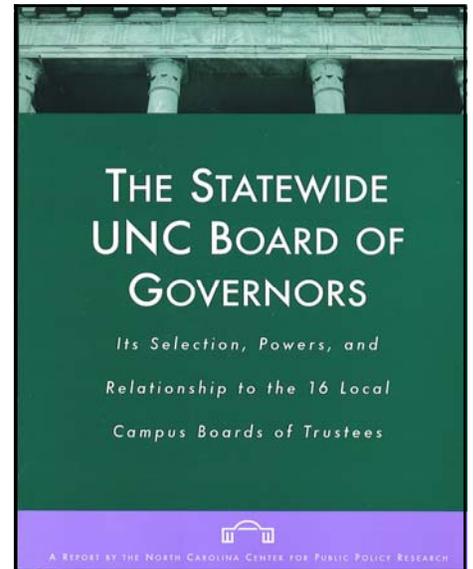
### Conducting Nonpartisan Research on Key Public Policy Issues Facing North Carolina

public universities and key issues in higher education. The 402-page report opens with a brief history of the Board of Governors, which governs all 16 public universities. It describes the process of the legislature's selection of the Board and the Board's composition. It then examines the allocation of powers between the statewide board and the local campus boards of trustees.

The Center concludes that the legislature should relinquish the task of choosing the University system's Board of Governors and give that responsibility to the Governor, as is done in 46 other states. The Center's report also says that the Board itself needs to fulfill its statutory responsibility for long-range planning in higher education in coordination with the community colleges and private colleges and universities. And, it warns that seven tuition increases in the last eight years invite a lawsuit under the State Constitutional mandate that a university education "as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense." The report also says the research universities need to be more sensitive to statewide needs and that athletics programs need to be brought under control.

The Center's report on governance of public universities received tremendous news coverage – 162 articles in 84 newspapers so far, as well as coverage on 24 radio stations and 33 television stations. This included appearances on statewide public television's "N.C. People with Bill Friday" and "North Carolina Now," as well as on an "OpenNet" program broadcast statewide on cable TV by the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications.

**Governance of Public Universities in North Carolina** – In 2006, the Center published a ground-breaking study on the governance of



***"What is the state's most precious public asset? A lot of people would answer that it is the University of North Carolina System... On the other hand, some people would argue that the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is a competitor for the 'most precious' designation. As an independent, non-partisan observer, a careful and deliberate student, and an honest reporter on state governmental policy matters, it shines a bright light on the state's most important problems and policy decisions."*** D.G. Martin, Columnist for 42 N.C. Newspapers

***"The report recommends 11 sensible reforms to the legislature and the board [of Governors]...the findings ought to be taken seriously..."*** *The Charlotte Observer*

***"...exceptionally thorough, carefully researched, and judicious in its judgments."*** Raymond Dawson, former UNC Vice President for Academic Affairs

***"A five-year study by the private North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research sheds light on what's right and what's not about the state university system."*** *Greensboro News & Record*

***"I want to compliment you on a remarkably comprehensive and interesting study... I only wish other states would do the same."*** James J. Duderstadt, President Emeritus, University of Michigan

## Educating the Public

**Center Events Open to the Public** – Every other year, the Center hosts an event to educate the public about key issues facing North Carolina. This event is videotaped and then broadcast multiple times on cable TV stations across the state. “The Changing Face of North Carolina” – from demographics to

economics to politics to technology – was the focus this year. Participating as panelists were Republican Congresswoman Virginia Foxx, Democratic State Treasurer Richard Moore, UNC-Chapel Hill Business School Professor Jim Johnson, and Triangle Community Foundation President Andrea Bazán-Manson. The four panelists discussed these and other changes:

■ In 1900, 90 percent of North Carolinians lived in rural areas. In 1950, two-thirds lived in rural areas. Now only about half live in rural areas.

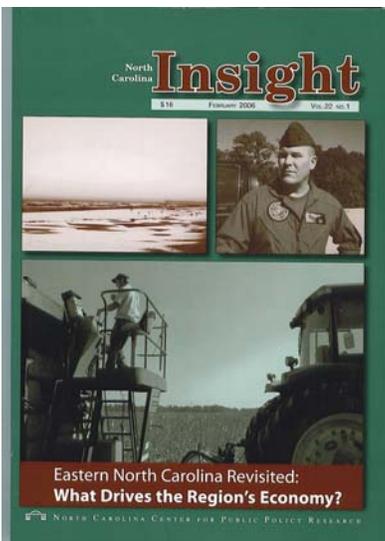
■ For 72 years, North Carolina was dominated by one political party. Now the state is highly competitive between Democrats (46 percent of registered voters) and Republicans (35 percent), with the fastest-growing segment being people registering as independents or unaffiliated (19 percent).

■ The state’s economy used to be dominated by textiles, tobacco, and furniture. But, since 1974, the number of farms in North Carolina has declined by 58 percent. The state is transitioning into a new economy based on pharmaceuticals, computer technology, banking and financial services, and biotechnology.

■ The latest U.S. Census showed that the Asian population in North Carolina grew by 128 percent during the last decade, while the Hispanic population grew by 394 percent, the largest percentage growth of Hispanics in any state.

■ The elderly population will explode when the first Baby Boomers turn 65 in 2011. The Medicaid program was 8 percent of the total state budget 10 years ago, but it now has doubled to 16 percent.

This is the sixth 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 58 times.



**Economic Development in Eastern North Carolina** – This year, the Center released a follow-up report on key opportunities and challenges facing Eastern North Carolina. This research builds on our 2001 study and found that the 41 counties in the East still have fewer college graduates, more high school dropouts, lower per capita income, and higher poverty than the rest of the state. An over-reliance on agriculture, low-wage retail, and low-skill manufacturing, combined with a less educated work force, hurts the region in competing for new jobs. And, in a global economy in a time of regional and national economic competition, stagnation in any part of North Carolina has an impact on all of the state. The East, the Center found, has improved on some indicators such as Internet access, natural gas availability, and employment.

But the state seems to keep looking for one big project that can drive the East the way Research Triangle Park drives the Triangle – such as the Global TransPark or the new international port near Southport. The Center said that different approaches to economic development are needed for different parts of the East. What works for Wilmington will not work for Warsaw.

**“We could use a little more consideration down here, and it’s good that organizations like the Public Policy Research Center keep reminding everybody of that.”**

*Washington Daily News*

**“The benefit of the Center’s most recent effort is the comparison of the two studies... I, for one, am appreciative of the Center for focusing on this as a matter of statewide importance.”**

*Elizabeth City Daily Advance*

**“...[The East] needs special attention... [The Center] did offer solid recommendations” that “are effective public policy strategies for helping a distressed region.”**

*The Charlotte Observer*

## Improving Public Policy

■ **Addressing Domestic Violence** – Our 2005 study of ways to address domestic violence yielded three more actions by the 2006 legislature in response to our recommendations – a new family court in Wake County, \$350,000 appropriated for shelters for victims of domestic violence, and continuation of a legislative study commission.

■ **Addressing the Shortage of Teachers** – The new President of the UNC system used our research on N.C.’s teacher shortage in his April Inaugural Address and said improving the public schools – including addressing the shortage of teachers – will be one of his top priorities.

■ **Reducing Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity** – The legislature appropriated \$2 million to address disparities in health care, as the Center recommended in its 2004 study of race, ethnicity, and public policy outcomes.

■ **Curbing Misuse of the State Budget Process** – Over the years, the Center has consistently documented the dangers of the legislature’s use of special provisions in the budget bill to amend laws unrelated to the budget. This year, legislative leaders curbed the practice to its lowest level in 20 years.

## Enhancing Government Accountability

Center continued to enhance government accountability and educate voters by publishing the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of rankings of the effectiveness of all 170 members of the N.C. General Assembly. In recent years, we have added rankings of legislators based on their attendance and on 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.

**Rankings of the Most Influential Lobbyists** – In November, the Center released the 13th 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.

### Rankings of Legislators’ Effectiveness, Attendance, and Roll Call Voting Participation –

In April, the

2005

*Rankings of Effectiveness, Attendance, and Roll Call Voting Participation for the 2005 North Carolina General Assembly*

2005

*Rankings of the Most Influential Lobbyists in the 2005 North Carolina General Assembly*



A report by

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

Sam Watts  
November 2006

## Center Wins National Awards

**Most Distinguished Research** – The Center won two national awards for studies published this year. The Center’s study of *The Statewide UNC Board of Governors: Its Selection, Powers, and Relationship to the 16 Local Campus Boards of Trustees* won the award for “Most Distinguished Research” from the national Governmental Research Association, a group of 33 public policy groups in 22 states.

**Policy Studies That Best Educate the Public** – The Center’s theme issue of *North Carolina Insight* on economic development in Eastern North Carolina also won a Certificate of Merit from the national Governmental Research Association for “policy studies that best educate the public.” Last year, the Center’s study of domestic violence won the top award in this same category. We are really pleased to receive this year’s double recognitions for high-quality research.

The Governmental Research Association

GRA

2006 Award  
For  
Most Distinguished Research

Is Presented To

North Carolina Center for  
Public Policy Research

For Its Report

The Statewide UNC Board of Governors: Its Selection, Powers, and Relationship to the 16 Local Campus Boards of Trustees

August 1, 2006

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## Looking Ahead to 2007

**Follow-Up Evaluation of Charter Schools** – North Carolina first authorized charter schools in 1996. Since then, each of the available 100 charters has been awarded under the law. Some have been revoked or allowed to

expire, meaning 138 schools have at one time or another held a state charter. Efforts to raise or eliminate the cap have been proposed in the legislature since the cap was reached in 2000. The law establishing charter schools outlined six goals. The Center's evaluation will look at charter school performance under these six goals, including academic performance, educational innovations, racial diversity, and financial stability.

**Examination of High School Dropout Rates** – North Carolina's official dropout rate has become a source of controversy. Two national reports – by The Education Trust in Washington D.C. and by the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta – have criticized the way the state calculates its dropout and graduation rates. Our analysis will outline four ways of counting dropout rates and describe various programs in North Carolina that are working to prevent or reduce dropouts. We also will outline recommendations for improving the way the state reports dropout rates and ways to reduce the number of dropouts.

**Citizens' Guide to the Legislature** – In 2007, we'll publish the 16th edition of *Article II: A Guide to the 2007-2008 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 counties in their districts. For legislators who served in the previous session, the guide will list five bills they introduced in 2005-2006, their votes on 12 bills of statewide interest, and rankings of attendance and roll call voting participation, as well as a history of their effectiveness rankings.

**Community Colleges** – North Carolina has 58 community colleges enrolling more than 800,000 students. About 75 percent of these students are enrolled in programs to prepare them for direct transition from community college to work. For example, the colleges train almost all public safety officers – police, fire, and emergency medical staff. Sixty percent of the state's nurses are produced through community colleges, and about one-third of our teachers start out at these colleges. The other 25 percent of community college students are enrolled in programs that will allow them to transfer to public and private colleges and universities. The Center is studying five key issues facing the community college system in North Carolina: (1) the community colleges' role in job training and economic development; (2) their role in meeting work force needs in fields of shortage such as teaching, nursing, and biotechnology; (3) ease of transfers from community colleges to public and private four-year institutions; (4) community college faculty pay; and (5) governance of community colleges.

## Your Ideas

We welcome your suggestions for topics on which the Center's independent, nonpartisan research could make a difference. To make a suggestion or order a publication, please write us at

P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, 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, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the goals of a better-informed public and a 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 our research, the Center makes recommendations for improving the way government serves the people of this state.*