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NEWS RELEASE

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**LATEST RANKINGS SHOW NEW TOP LOBBYIST AND NEW GENERATION OF MOST
INFLUENTIAL LOBBYISTS IN LEGISLATURE**

Today, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research released its latest rankings of the 55 most influential lobbyists in the state legislature. The rankings reveal a new top lobbyist in Raleigh and 13 newcomers to the rankings. Also, many of the lobbyists on both sides of new laws to regulate and tax alcohol and tobacco gained influence. The rankings are based on surveys of all legislators, registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and the capital news media.

"A new generation of lobbyists is influencing public policy in North Carolina," says Sam Watts, the Center's policy analyst who conducted the survey. "Only one of the lobbyists rated as most influential in our first set of rankings in 1982 is still lobbying."

A New #1

Topping the list for the first time is John McMillan, a contract lobbyist with the law firm of Manning, Fulton & Skinner, PA in Raleigh. McMillan represented 25 clients during the most recent legislative session, including Anheuser-Busch, the Insurance Federation of North Carolina, the Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America, the N.C. Symphony Society, and SAS Institute. McMillan has been ranked among the most influential lobbyists in the state since 1993. He succeeds Roger Bone at the top of the rankings. Bone was a former legislator and contract lobbyist who held the top slot in the 2007-08 session but died in January 2009.

"There are any number of very effective lobbyists who represent their clients' interests with legislators," says McMillan. "They all know that the most effective lobbying involves developing trusting relationships with legislators and providing them with timely, relevant, and accurate information."

13 Lobbyists Ranked Among the Most Influential for the First Time

The highest-ranked of the lobbyists who are ranked for the first time is Roger Bone's son, Fred Bone, who appears in this top group for the first time at 8th. The other 12 newcomers to the list include: Johnny Tillett at 24th, Lori Ann Harris (27th), Dean Plunkett (30th), Bruce Thompson (33rd), Lisa Martin (45th), Al Ripley (46th), David Barnes (47th), Joe Stewart (48th), Scott Gardner (51st), Estherine King Davis (52nd), Hurshell Baggett (53rd), and Frank Gray (54th). Six of these 13 newcomers to the rankings are contract lobbyists with multiple clients.

“The challenge at the beginning was learning how the General Assembly works and getting to know legislators, staff, and other lobbyists,” says Johnny Tillett of McGuire Woods Consulting, who represented 24 clients and is new to the rankings. “I was fortunate to have several good mentors starting out who helped me with my learning curve. Many of the veteran lobbyists helped the newcomers. I think that you earn respect as a lobbyist the same way you do in any profession – by having a reputation for integrity and honesty and by working hard.”

Influence Builds When a Policy Issue Is Hot

The Center says hot issues often lead to lobbyists being ranked among the most influential. They may be ranked among the most influential in one session and not ranked in another when the issue on which they lobby gains or loses importance in the legislature. For example, the 2009 legislature passed a ban on smoking at most restaurants and bars and increased excise taxes on beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, and other tobacco products. Lobbyists working on both sides of these debates rose this session, while those working for real estate and home-building issues declined in the rankings since the 2007-08 session when a real estate transfer tax option was a hot issue before the legislature.

At least seven of the lobbyists who gained in the new rankings worked on alcohol and tobacco issues during the 2009 long session. For example, Gene Ainsworth lobbied for Reynolds American and ranked 35th, gaining nine slots since the last legislative session. Dean Plunkett, ranked 30th, made the rankings for the first time while lobbying for the N.C. Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association. Other lobbyists working on alcohol and tobacco issues who rose in the rankings include John McMillan (1st), Sandy Sands (3rd), Fred Bone (8th), Ken Melton (31st), and Frank Gray (54th).

By contrast, the issue that boosted the rankings of many influential lobbyists in the 2007-08 session was legislation that allowed counties to place either a real estate transfer tax or a sales tax increase on local ballots for voter approval. Three lobbyists whose influence rose that session saw their rankings decline in the 2009-10 session. Mike Carpenter, who represents the N.C. Home Builders Association, dropped seven spots to 21st in the new rankings. Tim Kent and Rick Zechini, both of whom represented the N.C. Association of Realtors, also dropped in this year’s rankings. “Still, to be ranked as one of the top 55 lobbyists at all is a mark of influence in the legislature,” says the Center’s Watts.

Two Legislative Liaisons for State Agencies Make the Rankings

Two lobbyists for state agencies also were ranked among the most influential. Andy Willis, the legislative liaison for Governor Beverly Perdue, rose to 12th, gaining 17 spots over his previous ranking when he lobbied for the 16-campus UNC system. Historically, the legislative liaisons for the governor’s office and the UNC system have fared well in the rankings. The only other legislative liaison for a state agency ranked highly this session is Kevin Howell at 26th, representing North Carolina State University. Howell represented Gov. Mike Easley in the last legislative session.

A Record Number of Contract Lobbyists Who Represent Multiple Clients Are in the Top Echelon

A record number of contract lobbyists are ranked among the most influential this year – 29 of the top 55, including 11 of the top 15. Contract lobbyists represent multiple clients, and most of them are attorneys. Because they have multiple clients, they maintain a constant presence in the legislature. Center analyst Watts says, “The rise of contract lobbyists is evidence that lobbying has become a full-time job for many. This is the second session in a row with a record number of contract lobbyists ranked among the most influential.”

A Single Client Using Teams of Lobbyists Is a Growing Trend

Another pattern in the rankings is for teams of lobbyists to represent one powerful client. Among the 23 lobbyists who work for a single for-profit or nonprofit client, there are five pairs of lobbyists in the top 55 that work for the same organizations. These five companies and associations are: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C., represented by Ken Wright (18th) and Mark Fleming (28th); the N.C. Chamber, a business group represented by John McAlister (13th) and Joe Stewart (48th); the N.C. Home Builders Association, represented by Mike Carpenter (21st) and Lisa Martin (45th); the N.C. Medical Society, represented by Hugh Tilson Jr. (11th) and Hurshell Baggett (53rd); and the N.C. Association of Realtors, represented by Rick Zechini (20th) and Tim Kent (39th).

The 13 companies, associations, or nonprofits which employ a lobbyist on the list are N.C. Advocates for Justice, represented by Richard Taylor Jr. at 16th; Progress Energy, represented by Kathy Hawkins (now with Duke Energy) at 17th; the N.C. Beer & Wine Wholesalers Association, represented by Dean Plunkett (30th); the N.C. Sheriffs Association, by Edmund Caldwell (32nd); the N.C. League of Municipalities, by Ellis Hankins (38th); the N.C. Association of Educators, then-represented by Cecil Banks (40th); the N.C. Bankers Association, by Paul Stock (42nd); Nationwide Insurance, by Susan Valauri (44th); the N.C. Justice Center, by Al Ripley (46th); the N.C. Outdoor Advertising Association, by Tony Adams (49th); Duke Energy, then-represented by Scott Gardner (now retired) at 51st; Elecricities of North Carolina, by Estherine Davis (52nd); and the N.C. School Boards Association, by Leanne Winner (55th).

Other Trends Noted by the Center

A record number of African Americans ranked among the most influential lobbyists, including Johnny L. Tillett (24th), Kevin Howell (26th), Lori Ann Harris (27th), and Estherine Davis (52nd). This doubles the previous record of African Americans who were ranked. Twenty-nine African Americans serve in the 170-member General Assembly.

Eight women ranked among the most influential lobbyists. The highest-ranked woman on the list is Kathy Hawkins (17th), followed by Theresa Kostrzewa (23rd), Lori Ann Harris (27th), Jennie Dorsett (36th), Susan Valauri (44th), Lisa Martin (45th), Estherine Davis (52nd), and Leanne Winner (55th). The highest number of female lobbyists ever ranked as most influential in one session was 12 in the 1997 session. Forty-five women now serve as legislators.

Why and How the Lobbyist Rankings Are Done

“The rankings of the most influential lobbyists help citizens understand which key interests and organizations have clout with legislators in North Carolina,” says Watts. “The rankings shed light on what is often an invisible process. They also show changes in the lobbying profession and illustrate which issues were the hottest.” This is the 15th time the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has released its rankings of lobbyists.

The Center’s new lobbyist rankings are based on results from a survey conducted in November and December 2009. All 50 state Senators, 119 Representatives (one had resigned mid-session), 471 registered lobbyists (including the lead state agency legislative liaisons), and 14 state capital news correspondents were asked to list the 10 most influential lobbyists or state agency legislative liaisons during the 2009 session of the North Carolina General Assembly. Survey respondents received a list of all lobbyists and legislative liaisons who were registered with the Secretary of State at the end of the 2009 session.

Seventy-one of the 119 House members (60%) responded to the Center's survey, as did 28 of the 50 Senators (56%), 156 of the 471 lobbyists and lead legislative liaisons who regularly work in the legislature and who are based in North Carolina (33%), and eight of 14 capital news correspondents (57%). The overall response rate was 40%.

At the end of the 2009 session, 765 lobbyists were registered with the Secretary of State, representing 805 different companies or organizations. The Center's calculations of the number of lobbyists count each lobbyist only once, even if that person represents more than one client. The Secretary of State's records also listed 106 legislative liaisons that represented 73 different state government agencies and licensing boards, but the Center surveys only the lead liaison for each agency or board.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research corporation created in 1977 to evaluate state government programs and to study public policy issues facing North Carolina. It receives general operating support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, with additional funding from eight other private foundations, 120 corporate contributors, and about 500 individual and organizational members. The Center publishes a journal called *North Carolina Insight* and in-depth research reports. The Center recently has conducted studies of issues affecting the aging in North Carolina, key issues facing community colleges, and how to prevent and reduce high school dropouts. Upcoming studies will examine mental health reform, state water policy, and policies on financial aid for students in public and private colleges and universities.

The new rankings of *The Most Influential Lobbyists in the N.C. General Assembly* are available from the Center for \$10. A set of three printed publications – including *Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature* (\$25); rankings of legislators' effectiveness, attendance, and roll call voting participation (\$10); and rankings of the most influential lobbyists (\$10) – is available for \$40. To order printed copies, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order by email from tbromley@nccppr.org. A PDF of the new rankings can be downloaded for \$10 from the Center's Website at www.nccppr.org.

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For more information about the rankings of the most influential lobbyists, call Sam Watts, policy analyst at N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, at (919) 832-2839 or at (919) 810-8747 (mobile).