
Center's First Joint Production With Public Television Examines Two-Party System in North Carolina

by Jack Betts and Vanessa Goodman

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has long sought to present its research findings through the broadcast media as well as in print. The Center realized that goal on Dec. 2, 1987 when the N.C. Center and the University of North Carolina Center for Public Television presented "North Carolina: The State of Two Parties" on prime-time statewide television. The program, based on an N.C. Center special report on the development of a two-party political system, was taped live at Raleigh's Theatre in the Park on December 1 and was aired the next night at 8 p.m. The television production was supervised by UNC Producer Ted Harrison, anchor of the network's "North Carolina This Week" program.

Thad Beyle, a UNC-CH professor of political science and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the N.C. Center, led a discussion by a panel of six prominent North Carolinians about the findings of the special report. The panelists were state Rep. Margaret Keesee-Forrester (R-Guilford); former N.C. Secretary of Natural Resources and Community Development Howard N. Lee of Chapel Hill; former Republican state Sen. Hamilton Horton of Winston-Salem; former Democratic legislator and former N.C. Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Herbert Hyde of Asheville; Greensboro

News & Record Editorial Page Editor John Alexander; and UNC-CH Political Science Professor Merle Black. The panelists discussed how North Carolina has developed into a two-party state and argued about what the changes in North Carolina politics will mean.

In the past 20 years, North Carolina politics has undergone a revolution—sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy. A state dominated by Democrats since the turn of the century, North Carolina since 1966 has been transformed into a state with a new political balance. Democrats still dominate politics at the state and at the local level, but Republicans regularly are winning the big elections—and lately, more of the little ones, too. North Carolina has become a two-party state in theory and in fact. The evidence of the shifting political winds abounds. What is this evidence? And if North Carolina does have a two-party state, what difference does that make in terms of state policy?

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research has examined both these questions. In answering the first, it has found startling documentation of the rise of the Republican Party. Much of that is well known.

Jack Betts is editor of North Carolina Insight. Vanessa Goodman is a former Center intern.



Jack Belts

Panelists preparing for taping of two-party symposium on Dec. 1, 1987. From left, seated, John Alexander, Merle Black, Hamilton Horton, Herbert Hyde, Margaret Keese-Forrester, and Howard Lee.

The GOP's candidate for President has carried the state in every contest but one since 1968, as well as winning two races for governor and four races for U.S. Senator. In all, the Republican Party has won nine of the 14 major statewide races since 1968—a winning percentage of 64 percent.

But the evidence goes deeper. Republicans hold three of the state's 11 congressional seats, held both U. S. Senate seats from 1980 to 1986, hold about 30 percent of the seats in the General Assembly, and have a majority on nearly 30 percent of the county Boards of Commissioners. How could this come about in a state that long was the province of Democrats? The answer lies in voter registration and demographics. Consider:

■ While Democratic registration grew by 37 percent from 1966-86, Republican registration was growing nearly four times as fast—by 143 percent. When the period began, Democrats had nearly a 4-1 edge in registration; by the last election in 1986, it was about 2.5:1. The number of unaffiliated voters also grew rapidly in this period. About half the new registrants are Democrats, while the other half are Republicans or unaffiliated. Twenty years ago, 80 percent of new voters were Democrats. See Table 1 for more.

■ The evidence shows that while Republican

strength is growing across the board, it is soaring in the state's most populous areas. In Wake County, Democratic registration grew by 81 percent, but Republican registration grew by 707 percent; in Guilford, Democrats grew by nearly 42 percent, Republicans by 150 percent; in Forsyth, Democrats grew by 27 percent, Republicans by 134 percent.

■ On the local level, Republican strength is beginning to grow rapidly, too. In 1974, for instance, only 80 of the state's 477 commissioners were Republican. By 1986, the number had grown by 76 percent, to 141. What's more, in 1987, Republicans held a majority on 29 county Boards of Commissioners—more than double the number they controlled in 1974. See Table 2 and Map 1 for more. And the party is making modest gains in other offices. The GOP now counts 13 of the state's Registers of Deeds, 14 of the Clerks of Court, and 19 of the Sheriffs among its members.

■ And in terms of county voting, what once was a solidly Democratic state has become a solidly Republican state in presidential elections. In the period 1968-1980, only 10 North Carolina counties voted consistently (at least 75 percent of the time) Democratic in *presidential* elections; 40 counties voted consistently Republican, and the rest had mixed voting records. See Table 3 and Map 2 for

more.

What does it all mean? Some skeptics say it makes little difference who's in office, particularly in a state that has a Republican governor without veto power and facing a heavily Democratic legislature. But the Center's research shows there is a difference. Consider what happens during Republican administrations:

■ There's more of an emphasis on "workfare" programs designed to give welfare recipients job skills to reduce the number of citizens on welfare.

During Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt's eight-year term, the state had workfare programs in only eight counties. But during the first three years of Gov. Jim Martin's term, the state added workfare programs in 20 more counties, with 15 additional county programs to be added in fiscal year 1987-88. See Table 4 for more.

■ Fewer state-paid abortions are performed. During Hunt's terms, the number of state-paid abortions averaged 5,371 per year; under Martin, the number has dropped to 3,662 state-paid abortions.

Table 1. Statewide Voter Registration by Party (1966-1986)

Year	Total registration	Democrats	% of voters	Republicans	% of voters	Unaffiliated	% of voters
1966	1,933,763	1,540,499	79.7	344,700	17.8	48,564 *	2.5
1968	**2,077,538	1,568,859	75.5	448,637	21.6	52,234	2.5
1970	**1,945,187	1,464,055	75.3	426,159	21.9	48,524	2.5
1972	**2,357,645	1,729,436	73.4	541,916	22.9	79,129	3.4
1974	2,279,646	1,654,304	72.6	537,568	23.6	87,744	3.8
1976	**2,513,664	1,804,827	71.8	601,897	23.9	106,940	4.3
1978	2,430,210	1,764,126	72.6	567,039	23.3	99,045	4.1
1980	**2,774,844	1,974,889	71.2	677,077	24.4	120,905	4.4
1982	2,674,787	1,924,394	72.0	640,675	24.0	109,293	4.1
1984	**3,270,933	2,289,061	70.0	838,631	25.6	142,436	4.4
1986	3,080,990	2,114,536	68.6	836,726	27.2	129,728	4.2
NEW:	1,147,227	574,037		492,026		81,164	

* Estimated

** Total registration does not include American party in 1970 or other minor parties. (percentages rounded to nearest tenth)

Material compiled from State Board of Elections

Other sources consulted: U.S. Census Bureau

Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives

Secretary of State's Office

N.C. Democratic Headquarters

N.C. Republican Headquarters

NOTE: 1966 was the first year statistics were compiled by the state Board of Elections.

NOTE: Table indicates: 1,147,227 new voters in 1986 compared to 1966

Of those: 574,037, or 50.2 percent, have been Democrats

492,026, or 43.0 percent, have been Republicans

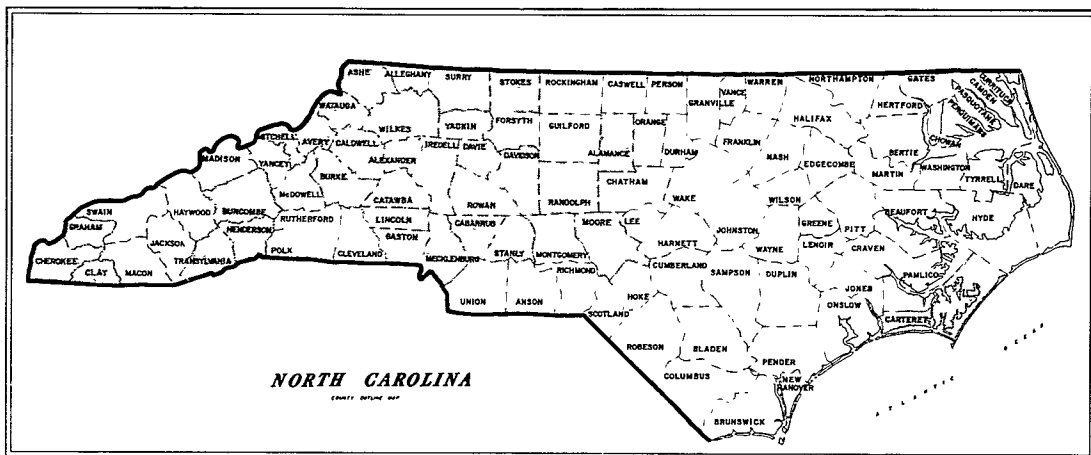
81,164, or 6.8 percent, have been Unaffiliated

Thus: 569,520, or 49.8 percent of the new registrants since 1966,

have chosen not to register Democratic in North Carolina.

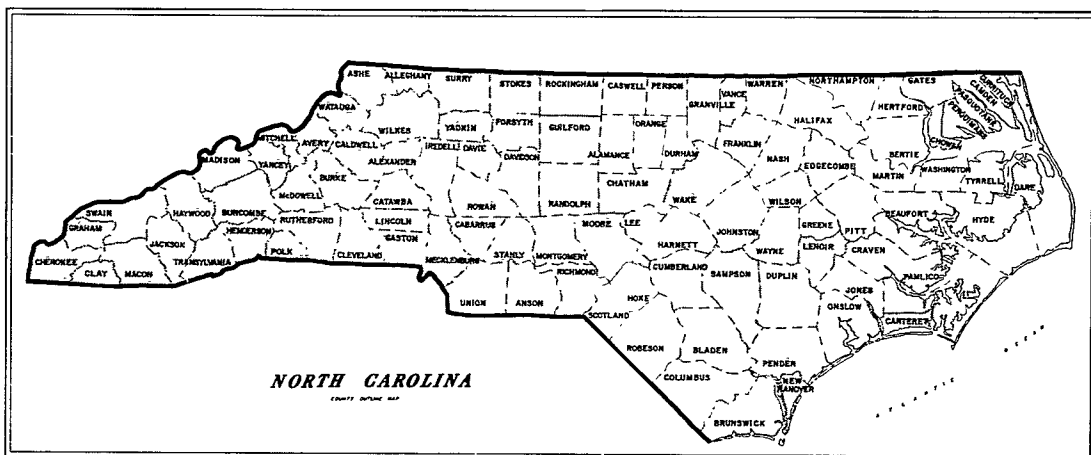
Chart prepared by Vanessa Goodman, N.C. Center Intern

Map 1. County Boards of Commissioners Controlled by Republicans and by Democrats, 1987-88



- Republican
- Democrat

Map 2. Counties Voting Consistently By Party, 1968-80



- Republican
- Democrat
- Mixed

See Table 5 for more.

■ State parks appear to get more funding. Under Gov. Jim Hunt, state parks spending—including land acquisition, capital improvements, and field operations—averaged about \$3.2 million a year. During the administrations of Gov. Jim Holshouser and Gov. Jim Martin, the state has averaged \$10.6 million a year in spending on parks. TV panel members heatedly debated this finding, with Republican members taking credit for getting far more money for parks than Democrats, and Democrats insisting that the GOP had little to do with the increased funding. Such spending decisions, these panel members said, are made by the legislature—where Democrats predominate—and were not due to the action of Republican governors. See Table 6 for more.

■ And both Republicans and Democrats tinker with the state's road building program in various ways. While Democrat Hunt was in office, for instance, roadwork was speeded up on U.S. 264 from Raleigh to Wilson, Hunt's hometown. While Holshouser was in office, work was advanced on U.S. 321 and U.S. 421 near Boone, Holshouser's hometown. However, the record shows that because of the time-consuming nature of highway building projects, it's not often that a governor can begin and finish a new project during his own term in office. At

most, governors are able to move road projects up on the priority list. There appears to be less manipulation of road budgets than in the years prior to 1973, before the state Board of Transportation was created to oversee highway and other transportation programs. And there are differences in approaches to such issues as economic development. An article in the June 1987 issue of *North Carolina Insight*, titled "When It Comes to Economic Development, Jim Martin and Bob Jordan Have Big Plans," examines these differences.

These are just some indications of the policy differences that occur when Democrats or Republicans are in office. But as the state continues its political evolution, there seems to be little doubt that North Carolina has developed into a two-party state.

Not everyone agrees with these conclusions, of course. Ken Eudy, executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party, agrees that Republicans have made major advances. "But I strongly object to the comparisons on workfare, abortion, and state parks. They are unfair."

Eudy notes that workfare "was a new concept under Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt. It didn't exist under Republican Gov. Jim Holshouser. And it would have been increased under any governor.... And on state parks, the legislature [dominated by Democrats] approved the money.... Martin simply

Table 2. Party Affiliation of N.C. County Commissioners (1974-1986)

Year	Total # of Commissioners	Democrat	Republican	Majority Democratic Boards	Majority Republican Boards	% Republican
1974	477	396	80	86	14	17%
1976	484	437	46	89	11	10%
1978	493	428	65	85	15	13%
1980	492	398	94	80	20	19%
1982	494	431	63	89	11	13%
1984	492	392	100	77	23	20%
1986	502	361	141	71	29	28%

Material taken from *County Lines*, published by N.C. Association of County Commissioners. 1974 was the first year in which a comprehensive breakdown of county commissioners in N.C. was recorded by the Association.

Chart prepared by Vanessa Goodman.

Table 3. Counties Voting Consistently* Democratic, Republican, or Mixed in Recent U.S. Presidential Elections, 1968-1980

County	Democrat	Republican	Mixed	County	Democrat	Republican	Mixed
Alamance			X	Johnston			X
Alexander		X		Jones			X
Alleghany			X	Lee			X
Anson			X	Lenoir		X	
Ashe		X		Lincoln		X	
Avery		X		Macon		X	
Beaufort			X	Madison			X
Bertie	X			Martin			X
Bladen			X	McDowell		X	
Brunswick			X	Mecklenburg		X	
Buncombe		X		Mitchell		X	
Burke		X		Montgomery			X
Cabarrus		X		Moore		X	
Caldwell		X		Nash			X
Camden			X	New Hanover		X	
Carteret		X		Northampton	X		
Caswell			X	Onslow			X
Catawba		X		Orange	X		
Chatham			X	Pamlico			X
Cherokee		X		Pasquotank			X
Chowan			X	Pender			X
Clay		X		Perquimans			X
Cleveland			X	Person			X
Columbus			X	Pitt			X
Craven			X	Polk		X	
Cumberland			X	Randolph		X	
Currituck			X	Richmond			X
Dare		X		Robeson	X		
Davidson		X		Rockingham			X
Davie		X		Rowan		X	
Duplin			X	Rutherford		X	
Durham	X			Sampson		X	
Edgecombe			X	Scotland	X		
Forsyth		X		Stanly		X	
Franklin			X	Stokes		X	
Gaston		X		Surry			X
Gates			X	Swain			X
Graham		X		Transylvania		X	
Granville			X	Tyrrell	X		
Greene	X			Union			X
Guilford		X		Vance			X
Halifax	X			Wake		X	
Harnett			X	Warren			X
Haywood			X	Washington	X		
Henderson		X		Watauga		X	
Hertford	X			Wayne			X
Hoke	X			Wilkes		X	
Hyde			X	Wilson			X
Iredell		X		Yadkin		X	
Jackson			X	Yancey			X

Source: Earl Black and Merle Black, unpublished research base for *Politics and Society in the South*

* In at least 75% of the elections

**Table 4. County Workfare*
Programs, by Date of
Implementation**

Counties prior to 1985, Democratic Administration	Implementation date
Ashe	January 1, 1983
Buncombe	September 1, 1984
Caldwell	July 1, 1982
Davidson	July 1, 1982
Moore	July 1, 1982
Nash	July 1, 1982
Pitt	July 1, 1982
Rowan	July 1, 1982
Counties after 1985, Republican Administration	Implementation date
Beaufort	January 1, 1986
Carteret	January 1, 1986
Catawba	August 1, 1986
Craven	August 1, 1986
Cumberland	July 1, 1986
Durham	August 1, 1986
Guilford	February 1, 1987
Iredell	September 1, 1986
Lee	August 1, 1986
Mitchell	September 1, 1986
New Hanover	January 1, 1987
Orange	November 1, 1986
Polk	September 1, 1986
Rutherford	September 1, 1985
Sampson	July 1, 1986
Scotland	August 1, 1985
Vance	May 1, 1987
Wake	August 1, 1986
Wilson	March 1, 1986
Yancey	October 1, 1986

**Total: 28 counties
15 additional counties
expected in 1987-1988.**

*Formally known as Community Work
Experience Project

Source: N.C. Department of Human Resources,
Division of Social Services

Chart prepared by Vanessa Goodman.

isn't much of a factor on the state budget."

The workfare programs grew much faster under Martin during his first three years in office than they did during Hunt's last three years in office—the same length of time. And abortions, after all, did go up in Democratic years and drop during Martin's years. The reasons for that are that Democrat Hunt was willing to seek extra contingency funds to pay for more abortions—and got the money—while Martin's administration has actively sought to reduce state funding on abortions—and succeeded. As for parks spending, the fact remains that the Republican governors tend to *ask* the legislature for *more* money for parks—and they get the money—while Democrats ask for less money. In both cases, the legislature has generally acceded to the governor's lead on parks questions.

The report did strike a responsive chord with some officials. Phillip J. Kirk Jr., Martin's chief of staff, says the report "gave substantial credence to my belief that North Carolina is almost a true two-party state. When Governor Martin is re-elected, I believe that historic event—the first re-election of a Republican governor this century or maybe ever—will mean we have arrived. A large number of our statewide victories in state races have occurred when the Republican Presidential candidate was carrying the state in landslide proportions, so the coattail effect was present."

Kirk believes the consistent number of local Republican victories, "the tremendous *percentage* increase in Republican registration, and the growing number of unopposed Republican legislators point to the validity of the theory that North Carolina is a two-party state.

"What does this mean? It means we have true competition for a growing number of offices. It means Republicans will be elected to the Council of State and to judgeships. This will encourage the movement toward a different method of selection for these positions. The veto issue will ultimately be resolved by the voters, rather than a handful of powerful legislators. It means the General Assembly will become more open as the Governor has opened the meetings of the Council of State. The only question is 'When,' not 'If,'" says Kirk.

The report generated extensive news coverage in towns from Gastonia to Garner to Greenville. A total of 62 articles ran in 50 newspapers, with radio and TV coverage as well. *The Fayetteville Observer* said the report was "unpleasant news for 'yellow-dog' Democrats, but it should warm the hearts of all who want North Carolina to be a two-party state in reality, not just in theory. As in a free-enterprise

system, competition in politics produces better, if sometimes messier, results over the long run.... [T]he most important benefits of a two-party system are the improved quality of candidates, the greater probability of fruitful change, and the higher standards of rectitude inspired by the opposition's scrutiny." The *Greensboro News & Record* said the report "dramatizes the emergence of North Carolina as a full-blown two-party state," while the *Winston-*

Salem Journal concluded, "The Center's study confirms that the era of one-party dominance is over in North Carolina." □ □

Copies of the report on "The Growth of the Two-Party System in North Carolina" are available for \$9.45 plus \$1 postage from the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C. 27602, or call (919) 832-2839. Videotape available from WUNC Television. Call (919) 737-2853 for ordering information.

Table 5. Number of Abortions and Amount of State Funds Spent in North Carolina

Fiscal Year	# of Abortions	Party***	% Increase/ Decrease	# of State-Funded Abortions	% Increase/ Decrease	Amount of \$ Spent
76/77	*	R/D	*	4,144	*	1,832,977
77/78	25,777	D	—	1,123	-369	223,276
78/79	27,799	D	+7.3	6,125	+445	1,302,801
79/80	30,155	D	+7.8	6,343	+3.6	1,366,921
80/81	30,000	D	-0.5	5,730	-9.6	1,233,301
81/82	29,890	D	-0.4	4,295	-25.0	984,446
82/83	31,392	D	+4.8	6,149	+43.2	1,253,697
83/84	34,138	D	+8.0	6,645	+8.1	1,357,371
84/85	32,478	D/R	-5.1	6,564	-1.2	1,316,770
85/86	32,849	R	+1.1	2,662	-247.0	557,129
86/87	**	R	**	4,181	+57.0	900,750

Average Number of Abortions During Years When Republicans Are in Power: 3,662
 Average State Spending on Abortions During Years Republicans Are in Power: \$1,096,252

Average Number of Abortions During Years When Democrats Are in Power: 5,371
 Average State Spending on Abortions During Years Democrats Are in Power: \$1,129,822

* Figures were not kept for years prior to 1978 by state Department of Human Resources.

** Total number of abortions for 1986-1987 not reported yet.

*** Fiscal year marked R/D was year in which Republican Gov. Jim Holshouser completed his term and Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt began his first term. Year marked D/R denotes year Hunt finished his second term and Gov. James G. Martin began his term. For budget purposes, 1976-77 was considered a Republican year, because the Holshouser Administration had set the budget priorities. Similarly, 1984-85 was considered a Democratic year, because the Hunt Administration had set the priorities.

Chart by Vanessa Goodman.

Source: Department of Human Resources

Table 6. Funding for State Parks (1973-1986)

Year	Advisory Budget Commission Proposal	Capital Improvements	Land Acquisition	Total Operations	Legislature Authorized**	Political Party In Power*****
1973-74	\$2,325,599	\$2,500,000	\$11,500,000 ***	\$1,191,618	\$15,191,618	Republican
1974-75	10,323,141	3,000,000	5,500,000 ***	1,394,111	9,894,111	Republican
1975-76	6,076,874	1,000,000	500,000	1,473,325	2,973,325	Republican
1976-77	10,474,874	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,507,318	3,507,318	R/D
1977-78	13,796,418	1,200,000 ***	500,000 ***	1,756,104	3,456,104	Democratic
1978-79	6,297,391	1,200,000 ***	500,000 ***	2,048,310	3,748,310	Democratic
1979-80	2,466,873	500,000	250,000	2,255,560	3,005,560	Democratic
1980-81	2,416,617	500,000	250,000	2,514,515	3,264,515	Democratic
1981-82	2,713,225	100,000	-0-	2,598,724	2,698,724	Democratic
1982-83	3,749,558	-0-	-0-	2,728,514	2,728,514	Democratic
1983-84	2,951,444	50,000 *	215,000 *	2,867,359	3,132,359	Democratic
1984-85	2,963,577	140,000 *	-0-	3,123,542	3,263,542	D/R
1985-86	4,157,433	850,000	11,185,000	3,491,517	15,526,517	Republican
1986-87	4,370,012	3,950,000 ****	8,800,000	3,999,180	16,749,180	Republican

Average authorized during Republican Years: \$ 10,640,344

Average authorized during Democratic Years: \$ 3,162,203

* Special bills

** Money authorized by General Assembly includes figures on state park administration, field operations, capital improvements, and land acquisition.

*** Source of funds was the federal Revenue-Sharing Program, in which federal funds were appropriated through the state budget by the General Assembly.

**** Includes \$1.2 million for the Community Service Workers Program.

***** Fiscal year marked R/D was year in which Republican Gov. Jim Holshouser completed his term and Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt began his first term. Year marked D/R denotes year Hunt finished his second term and Gov. James G. Martin began his term. For budget purposes, 1976-77 was considered a Republican year, because the Holshouser Administration had set the budget priorities. Similarly, 1984-85 was considered a Democratic year, because the Hunt Administration had set the priorities.

Note: The amount of money proposed comes from money in the General Fund. The authorization from the General Assembly comes from the General Fund except as noted. The chart illustrates large appropriations from the legislature in 1973-74, 1985-86, and 1986-87. These anomalies are due to sporadic funding of the state park system over the years. In some years, the General Assembly had more money to work with than in other years because of greater economic growth and larger tax revenues.

Chart prepared by Vanessa Goodman, N.C. Center Intern

Source: Office of State Budget and Management