



Lobbyists Bearing High-Tech Gadgets, and Other Tales from the Latest Lobbyist Rankings

by Mebane Rash Whitman

Lobbyists have long maintained that glad-handing, good jokes, and a hefty stash of campaign contribution cash are peripheral to winning one's way with the General Assembly. The real key to effective lobbying, they say, is getting good information into the hands of lawmakers. And the proliferation of innovative ways of communicating is having its effect on the trade.

This and other trends in the lobbying profession are apparent from the rankings in *The 50 Most Influential Lobbyists in the 1993 North Carolina General Assembly*, a report released by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research in August 1994. These trends include an increase in the number of new faces using high-tech gadgetry to work the halls of the General Assembly and the number of lobbyists forming teams to win their way with legislators. Hot public interest issues, like health care, also seem to fuel higher rankings for some lobbyists.

Patricia Pleasants, a lobbyist representing the National Federation of Independent Business, marvels at the trend toward high-tech lobbying. In 1993, for example, a group of business lobbyists hired a communications team to coordinate grassroots support for the proposed workers' compensation reform legislation.¹ Armed with a list of supporters for the bill and a sophisticated telephone system, communications firm employees would call people on the list and confirm support. Then, with the touch of a button, the citizens' telephone lines were directly linked to their legislators in Raleigh so they could express support for the bill.

"All they had to do was punch one button and the phone would automatically ring into that legislator's office," says Pleasants. "It was amaz-

ing." The ensuing barrage of calls to the legislative office building burned up the telephone lines. "The rumor was that one legislator got so many phone calls the phone broke," says Pleasants. "It's kind of a scary thought, that ability."

Ellis Hankins, a veteran lobbyist, has his own war stories. "I remember, during the 1990 session, that we got wind of a plan by the Senate appropriations leadership to cut the local reimbursements for the repealed inventory tax significantly, the next day. Out went a 'League LegisFAX' to 200 pre-programmed city hall numbers, and the next morning legislators' phones rang off the hook. By noon, that plan was dead, before the appropriations committees even met. Senator Bill Goldston asked me how in the world we got so many of our folks on the phone so fast with accurate information. It was music to my ears."

Welcome to the new age of lobbying. Beepers, cellular telephones, and laptop computers with modems are the essential tools of the trade, and technology is being used to provide quick and easy access to grassroots efforts, creating a powerful method of influencing legislators. As Terry Martin, capital correspondent for the *Winston-Salem Journal*, notes, "[T]he leading lobbyists regularly make use of such technology as facsimile machines, computers, videocameras, and telephone banks to ply their trade most effectively."²

Where does that leave Jane Doe, who has a concern about some particular issue but doesn't have access to a phone bank or a high-powered lobbyist? At least one commentator believes a well-timed call from a constituent still packs a punch.

Mebane Rash Whitman is the Center's policy analyst.



Karen Tam

Patricia Pleasants, a lobbyist for the National Federation of Independent Business, demonstrates some of the new tools of the lobbying trade.

"[L]egislators generally will pay more attention to one . . . genuinely concerned constituent than five lobbyists trying to win something for their clients," writes Danny Lineberry of *The Herald-Sun* of Durham, N.C.³ The trouble is, notes Lineberry, "Not many people call their legislators, unless it's about a particularly hot issue. Lobbyists are in the Legislative Building every day."

So how does one keep up with who's influencing who? One way is through the Center's lobbyist rankings. Lobbyists list their rankings on resumes; clients use them to evaluate effectiveness, to determine if a raise is merited, or to decide which lobbyist to hire; citizens can use them too.

As an editorial in the *Greensboro News & Record* observes, "Just as voters, at election time, need to know the candidates vying for the privilege of representing them in the General Assembly, so also do they need to know who it is who has their elected officials' attention. . . . That's why surveys such as this one, which ranks the top 50 lobbyists, are useful."⁴ This is the seventh time the Center has released its lobbyist rankings. The latest edition is based on results from a survey conducted during the fall of 1993 after adjournment of the regular session of the General Assembly.

Old and New Faces

Zeb Alley, who represents 18 clients with business and industry interests, received the top ranking for the fourth time in a row. Rounding out the top five spots were Allen Adams, representing 15 clients including the N.C. Retired Governmental Employees Association and Arts Advocates; Roger Bone, legislative liaison for the Department of Community Colleges and also representing 10 clients; Sam Johnson, representing 14 clients including IBM; and Bill Holman, representing the Sierra Club and other environmental groups. Although there was little movement among the top five spots, 30 percent of the 50 lobbyists ranked as most influential never had been ranked before.

The influx of newcomers and the shifts within the rankings make it apparent that a new generation of lobbyists is garnering the skills necessary to someday replace "the old guard." Fifteen of the 50 top lobbyists this legislative session have not been ranked previously among the most influential. Jim Phillips Jr. (11th), Governor Hunt's former legislative liaison, is the highest-ranked newcomer. Other newcomers to the rankings include: John McMillan (18th), representing 14 clients; D.G. Martin Jr.

(20th), legislative liaison for the UNC system; Harry Kaplan (21st), representing the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of N.C.; Gene Upchurch (22nd), representing Southern Bell; John Niblock (23rd), representing the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute; Phil Kirk (26th), representing N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry; and Mike Carpenter (29th), representing the N.C. Home Builders Association.

Carpenter attributes the success of fellow newcomers to their "ability to take care of business in committee, winning their battles there instead of on the floor." Ran Coble, the Center's executive director, notes, "The committee system is the key part of the lawmaking process. The floor is for show, and the committees are for go. Influential lobbyists learn the committee system and use it to their client's advantage."

Richard Bostic, one of the General Assembly's fiscal research analysts, agrees. "Over the past two or three years, lobbyists have been very active in the appropriations committee process. In the transportation committee, for example, lobbyists attend the daily meetings during the session. And lobbyists who are employed year-round work to influence study committees in the interim. On the Transporta-

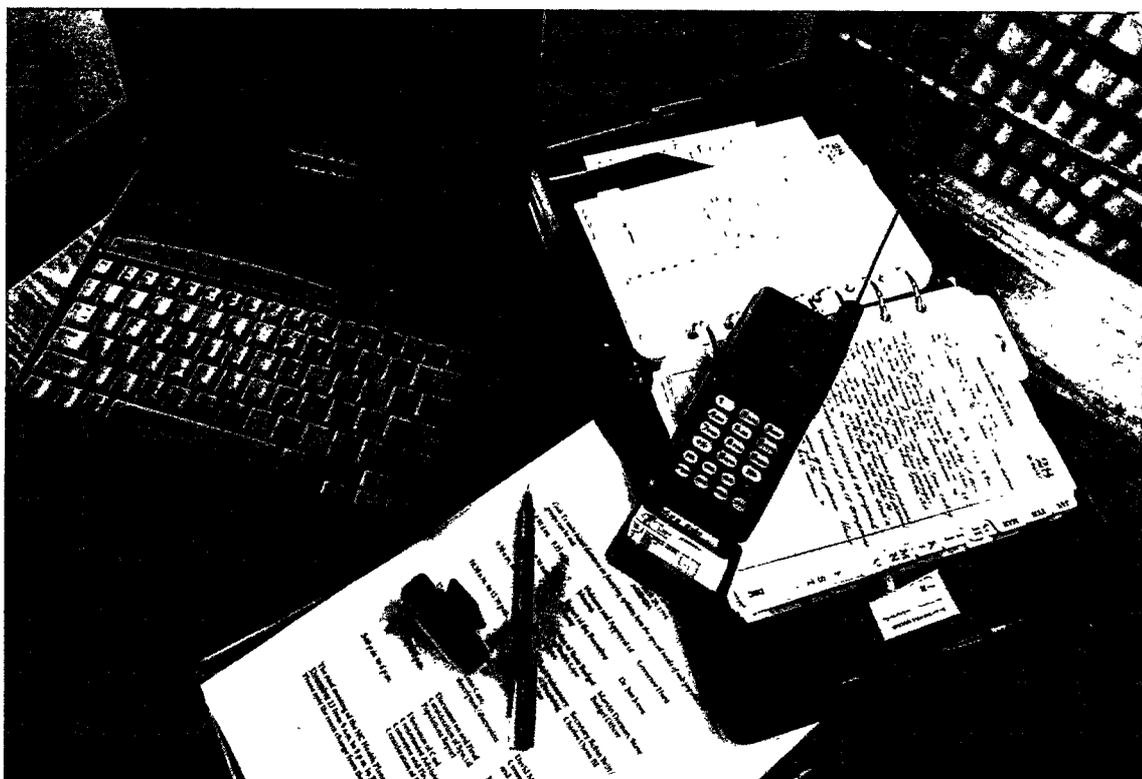
tion Oversight Committee, for example, lobbyists tried to influence the agenda and shape the recommendations made on some issues, such as overweight trucks."

Lobbying in Teams

Many of the traditional lobbying powerhouses in the legislature increased their clout by sending teams of lobbyists to Raleigh during the 1993 session. Six organizations and corporations—the American Petroleum Institute, Southern Bell, Carolina Power & Light Company, Citizens for Property Rights, the N.C. Retail Merchants Association, and the N.C. Association of County Commissioners—each were represented by three lobbyists ranked among the 50 most influential lobbyists. The American Petroleum Institute retained the three who collectively rank the highest, with Zeb Alley (1st), Marvin Musselwhite (8th), and Lawrence Bewley (16th) heading their lobbying team.

Ten other organizations and corporations—the Alliance of American Insurers, American Insurance Association, Amusement Machine Association, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C., N.C. Citizens

Laptop computers, flip phones, and other high-tech devices are quickening the pace of lobbying the legislature.



Karen Tam

for Business and Industry, North Carolina Association of Educators, ElectricCities of N.C., N.C. Hospital Association, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, and Microelectronics Center of N.C.—each were represented by two lobbyists ranked among the most influential.

Because power in the legislature is not as concentrated as it used to be, lobbyists have to lobby an increasing number of legislators if they want to be effective. This dispersion of power has increased team lobbying. Team lobbyists divide their responsibilities in numerous ways, says Coble, including “I’ll take the House, you take the Senate,” “I’ll take the Republicans, you take the Democrats,” and “I’ll take this bill, you take that bill.” Coalitions of lobbyists capitalize on the age-old adage that there is strength in numbers.

For example, Roger Bone subcontracts some of his work out to other lobbyists—one who specializes in legal issues, another who has contacts with Republicans, and another who works with African-American legislators. Farming work out in this manner allows Bone to take advantage of the different lobbyists’ contacts.

Hot Issues, Hot Lobbyists

Each legislative session, some issue moves to the front burner of public attention, and lobbyists working on that issue tend to move up in the rankings. In 1993, the hot issue was health care, and many lobbyists representing clients with interests in health care ranked among the most influential. They include: Zeb Alley (1st) and Harry Kaplan (21st), representing Kaiser Foundation Health Plan; Allen Adams (2nd), representing Maxicare North Carolina; Roger Bone (3rd) and Brad Adcock (44th), representing Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C.; Marvin Musselwhite (8th), representing the N.C. Obstetrical and Gynecological Society; Bill Pully (9th) and John Bode (13th), representing the N.C. Hospital Association; and Janis Ramquist (14th), representing the N.C. State Optometric Society.

The high rankings of health care lobbyists were “no surprise given their big hand last year in writing—and watering down—legislation to overhaul what is a \$20 billion-a-year industry in North Carolina,” writes Foon Rhee, capital correspondent for *The Charlotte Observer*. “In the frenzy before state legislators adjourned, it was mainly lobbyists who cobbled together a health care bill approved at the last minute. They had copies of it before many lawmakers, and knew far more about it.”⁵

The lobbyist who gained the most ground in the latest rankings, Pam Silberman, represented consumers in health care issues. Silberman, who has been a registered lobbyist since 1983, moved up from a tie for 35th in 1991–92 to 15th this year. From 1983 through July 1992, she lobbied exclusively for N.C. Legal Services Resource Center, representing low income families on health and public benefits issues. But, since the 1993 session, Silberman has lobbied extensively for comprehensive health care reform.

The N.C. Health Access Coalition, which she founded, is composed of 149 advocacy groups representing children, seniors, minorities, people with disabilities, labor, grassroots, and religious organizations. “The interest in health care reform expressed by citizens in the 1992 elections put health care on the legislative agenda,” Coble says. “That, plus Silberman’s individual skills, helped boost her influence.” Silberman is now the deputy director of the N.C. Health Planning Commission.

Contract Lobbyists

The other lobbyist who jumped substantially in the rankings was Lawrence Bewley, who moved up from 30th in 1991–92 to 16th in the current rankings. Bewley is a contract lobbyist⁶ representing 12 clients with business and industry interests, including American Express, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, and Citizens for Property Rights. From 1978 to 1992, as senior director of the state government relations department at R.J. Reynolds, Bewley’s major responsibility was the promotion and passage of a wide range of legislative initiatives by coordinating trade association and company resources. He is now president of his lobbying firm, Lawrence Bewley & Associates of Raleigh, which specializes in government relations and corporate affairs.

Ellis Hankins, ranked sixth this year, has also assumed the role of contract lobbyist. Hankins was the lead lobbyist for the League of Municipalities until February 1994. He is now with the law firm McNair & Sanford in Raleigh, representing seven clients including the Unisys Corporation, Phillips Petroleum, Lederle-Praxis Biologicals, Advantage Capital, Inc., as well as Brunswick, Sampson, and Richmond Counties.

“Lobbying for different clients, as a contract lobbyist or as part of a team, may lead to conflicts of interest in the future,” says Coble. “Clients may begin to request that their lobbyists sign exclusivity agreements to ward off potential problems.”

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Table 1.
The 15 Most Influential Lobbyists in the 1993 General Assembly

Lobbyist and Clients	previous rankings where applicable								former legislator	lawyer
	1993 1994	1991 1992	1989 1990	1987 1988	1985 1986	1983 1984	1981 1982			
Zebulon D. Alley of the Raleigh law firm Zebulon D. Alley, PA, representing 18 clients with business/industry interests including the American Petroleum Institute, Amusement Machine Association, NC Bankers Association, Carolina Power & Light Company, Citizens for Property Rights, Duke Power Company, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of NC, Microelectronics Center of NC, Public Service Company of NC, Southern Bell, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, and the NC Vending Association.	1	1	1	1	4	3	5	yes	yes	
J. Allen Adams of the Raleigh office of the law firm Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein, representing 15 clients with business/industry, arts, and health care interests including Arts Advocates of NC, NC Citizens for Community Action, Digital Equipment Corporation, NC Headstart Association, Maxicare North Carolina, and the NC Retired Governmental Employees Association.	2	2	3	3	3	n/a	n/a	yes	yes	
Roger W. Bone of the Raleigh lobbying firm Bone & Associates, representing 10 clients with business/industry, health care, and education interests including Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC, Chem-Nuclear Systems, NC Association of Long Term Care Facilities, NC Firemen's Association, NC Pork Producers Association, and the Tobacco Institute. Also representing the Department of Community Colleges as a legislative liaison.	3	4	10	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	no	

Table 1.
continued

Lobbyist and Clients	previous rankings where applicable								
	1993 1994	1991 1992	1989 1990	1987 1988	1985 1986	1983 1984	1981 1982	former legislator	lawyer
Samuel H. Johnson of the Raleigh law firm Johnson, Gamble, Mercer, Hearn & Vinegar, representing 14 clients with business/industry interests including Auto Insurance Agents of NC, Automobile Dealers Association of NC, NC Association of Certified Public Accountants, IBM Corporation, and NC Associated Industries.	4	3	2	2	1	2	2	yes	yes
William E. Holman representing the NC Chapter of the American Planning Association, Conservation Council of NC, NC Coalition for Public Transportation, NC Public Transportation Association, and the NC Chapter of the Sierra Club.	5	5	5	5	6	10(tie)	n/a	no	no
S. Ellis Hankins then representing the NC League of Municipalities, now with the Raleigh office of the law firm McNair & Sanford.	6	13	29	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	yes
William C. Rustin Jr. representing the NC Retail Merchants Association.	7	6	4	6	8	n/a	n/a	no	no
Marvin D. Musselwhite Jr. of the Raleigh office of the law firm Poyner & Spruill, representing 19 clients with business/industry and health care interests including the American Petroleum Institute, Browning-Ferris Industries of the South Atlantic, Electricities of NC, Hertz Corporation, Martin Marietta Aggregates, NC Obstetrical & Gynecological Society, PepsiCo. Inc., the Smokeless Tobacco Council, and the NC Association of Textile Services.	8	9	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes

Table 1.
continued

Lobbyist and Clients	previous rankings where applicable								
	1993 1994	1991 1992	1989 1990	1987 1988	1985 1986	1983 1984	1981 1982	former legislator	lawyer
William A. Pully representing the NC Hospital Association.	9	15	15(tie)	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	yes
Jay M. Robinson representing the University of North Carolina system as a legislative liaison.	10	8	11	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	no
Jim W. Phillips Jr. representing the Office of the Governor as a legislative liaison.	11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	yes
C. Ronald Aycock representing the NC Association of County Commissioners.	12	11	14	9	17	15	n/a	no	yes
John T. Bode of the Raleigh law firm Bode, Call & Green, representing 11 clients with health care and business/industry interests including the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, Carolina Power & Light Company, Managed Health Services, Inc., NC Hospital Association, NC Radiologists, and Southern Bell.	13	10	9	18	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	yes
Janis L. Ramquist representing nine clients with health care, education, and business interests including the Association of American Publishers, Learning Disabilities Association of NC, NC Association of Nurse Anesthetists, and NC State Optometric Society.	14	17(tie)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	no
Pam C. Silberman then representing the NC Legal Services Resource Center, NC Primary Health Care Association, and the NC Health Access Coalition, now the deputy director of the NC Health Planning Commission.	15	35(tie)	37	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	no	yes



Karen Tam

Bill Pully of the N.C. Hospital Association (center) consults with fellow lobbyists outside a meeting of the Health Planning Commission. Health care was a hot issue in the 1993 General Assembly, fueling higher rankings for lobbyists working on health-related issues.

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Currently, 31 of the 50 top lobbyists—or 62 percent—represent a single client, corporation, or interest.

Clients with Clout

The Center notes that some lobbyists may benefit from the stature of their clients. For instance, there have been different individuals working as legislative liaisons for the Governor's Office and the UNC system in recent legislative sessions, yet each has consistently ranked highly. "This suggests a combination of the talent of the lobbyist and the clout of the client," says Coble. Jim Phillips Jr., former legislative liaison for Governor Jim Hunt, debuts at 11th this year. Ward Purrington, Governor Jim Martin's legislative liaison, ranked 32nd (of the 40 lobbyists ranked that year) in the 1989–90 rankings and Zeb Alley made his debut at fifth place as Governor Hunt's legislative liaison in the 1981–82 rankings.

During the 1993 session, the UNC system's legislative liaison, Jay M. Robinson, helped secure a statewide bond issue of \$310 million in capital

projects for 16 campuses. Robinson ranked 10th this year. D.G. Martin, Robinson's successor and a lawyer as well as a former Democratic nominee for Congress, debuts at 20th in the 1993–94 rankings. Their predecessor, R.D. McMillan, also consistently ranked among the most influential lobbyists.

Public Interest Lobbyists

Five public interest lobbyists⁷ appear in this year's rankings: Bill Holman (5th), Pam Silberman (15th), Roslyn Savitt (17th), John Niblock (23rd), and Jo Ann Norris (30th). Niblock, who represents the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute, is the newcomer in this group. Governor Hunt proposed an early childhood development initiative called Smart Start in 1993, and Niblock's nonprofit institute supported Hunt's proposal. In 1993, Niblock also lobbied for the strengthening of child abuse laws and an improvement in child/staff ratios at child care centers.

Despite the appearance of several public interest lobbyists in the rankings, Lineberry, the capital correspondent for *The Herald-Sun*, is concerned that corporate lobbyists far outnumber public inter-

est lobbyists. "Obviously, business and industry lobbyists would work overtime to grease the skids for passage of a corporate tax cut, because millions could be at stake for their clients. Who would roam the halls of the Legislative Building, trying to shift a little more of the benefits of a tax cut to individuals and families? Who would argue that a cut in the sales tax—particularly the sales tax on food—might provide a more direct benefit to the state's citizens than a break for business? Not many lobbyists, that's for sure."⁸

Other Trends

- Several lobbyists ranked among those most influential in the 1993 session this time *will not return in 1995*, opening up the rankings for even more changes two years from now. Jay Robinson

of the UNC System has retired; Jim Phillips has returned to his law practice in Greensboro; and, as previously mentioned, Pam Silberman has left the N.C. Health Access Coalition to become the deputy director of the N.C. Health Planning Commission.

- Janis Ramquist, who represents clients with health care, education, and business interests, is the *highest ranked woman* this year at 14th. Overall, women captured 11 of the 50 spots, or 22 percent. In the 1991–92 rankings, nine of the 37 (24 percent) lobbyists ranked were women.
- And, 21 of 50 ranked lobbyists (or 42 percent) are *lawyers*, but only nine of 50 (18 percent) are *former legislators*. Sixteen of the 37 lobbyists (43 percent) ranked in 1991–92 were lawyers, and ten were former legislators (27 percent).

Janis Ramquist follows the action in an N.C. Health Planning Commission meeting. Ramquist, the top-ranked female lobbyist (14th), had several clients with health interests. Bill Rustin (7th) of the N.C. Retail Merchants Association also looks on.



Karen Tamm

The survey on which the rankings are based was sent to all state legislators, as well as legislative liaisons and registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and 33 capital news correspondents. Respondents were asked to list the 10 most influential lobbyists and/or legislative liaisons of the 1993 General Assembly session. Eighty-six of the 120 House members (72 percent) responded to the Center's survey, as did 44 of the 50 Senators (88 percent), 168 of the 350 lobbyists and legislative liaisons (48 percent), and 17 of 33 capital news correspondents (52 percent). The overall response rate was a solid 57 percent.

During the 1993 session, 493 lobbyists were registered with the Secretary of State, representing 548 different companies or organizations. The Secretary of State says there are 1,141 lobbyists registered, but this figure counts the same lobbyist 10 times if she or he has 10 different clients. The Center's calculations count each lobbyist only once. There were also 205 legislative liaisons representing 25 different state government agencies and licensing boards.

The lobbyist rankings are available for \$5.00 from the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602. They are a companion piece to *Article II: A Guide to the 1995-96 N.C. Legislature*, which is available for

\$22.50. *Article II* is a directory of legislators, including each legislator's educational background, occupation, list of bills introduced, committee assignments, voting records, and effectiveness rankings. ☐☐☐

FOOTNOTES

¹ Senate Bill 906 proposed to rewrite substantially the workers' compensation laws of North Carolina. At the end of the 1993 session, the bill had passed the Senate but was pending in the House. The bill later passed the House and was ratified on July 5, 1994. The act is known as "The Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 1994" and is codified in Chapter 97 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

² Terry Martin, "Medical Industry Lobbyists Rank High," *Winston-Salem Journal*, Winston-Salem, N.C., Aug. 31, 1994, p. 17.

³ Danny Lineberry, "Voice of the People Isn't Very Loud in 1994," *The Herald-Sun*, Durham, N.C., Sept. 4, 1994, p. A16.

⁴ "Lobbyists Have Punch in the Halls of State," *News & Record*, Greensboro, N.C., Sept. 4, 1994, p. F2.

⁵ Foon Rhee, "Medical Lobbyists Top List," *The Charlotte Observer*, Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 31, 1994, p. C1.

⁶ Contract lobbyists are those who represent multiple clients on a contract basis.

⁷ A public interest lobbyist is defined as someone who seeks a collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership of the organization. This definition excludes groups which engage in some public interest lobbying but have as their primary purpose the benefit and protection of their membership.

⁸ Lineberry, see note 3 above.

Article II:

A Guide to the 1995-96 N.C. Legislature

Available now, this comprehensive legislative guide profiles all 170 members of the state House and Senate. It also includes district maps, seating charts, committee assignments, bills introduced during the 1993-94 session, and effectiveness rankings for all current legislators who have previously served in the General Assembly, as well as a list of the 50 most influential lobbyists in the General Assembly. **Article II** is available for \$22.50 (postage, handling and tax included).

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