



FROM THE CENTER OUT

The Evolution of Party Politics: The March of the GOP Continues in North Carolina

by Mebane Rash Whitman

In March, the Center released the tenth edition of Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature. Article II is a comprehensive guide to the 1995–96 General Assembly, containing profiles of each member, effectiveness rankings, demographic trends since 1975, and committee assignments. The latest edition reveals three major trends: (1) the significant gains of the Republican Party, which now holds 92 of 170 seats in the legislature; (2) women have more power in the 1995–96 General Assembly because they secured plum committee chairs; and (3) African-American legislators lost the speakership and powerful committee chairs, so their influence has declined.

The importance of the November 1994 elections in North Carolina should not be underestimated. Newspaper headlines heralded “Tarheel Revolution,” and election results surprised even Republicans.¹ The Grand Old Party’s gains in elections at all levels of government—national, state, and local—were grand indeed. So grand that some think it could portend a 21st century of Republican dominance in North Carolina state politics.

Information about the gains of the GOP in North Carolina is available in *Article II: A Guide to the 1995–96 N.C. Legislature*, a report released by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research in March 1995. Other important trends also are apparent from the guide: women have more power in the 1995–96 General Assembly, while African Americans have less; there are many newcomers in the 1995–96 General Assembly, but not a record number; and the number of retirees in the legislature is up, while the number of lawyers continues to decline.

A Reactionary, Revolutionary, or Evolutionary Election?

Analysts disagree about how to frame the recent electoral wins of the GOP in North Carolina. Were the wins *reactionary*, that is, were voters reacting in an angry anti-incumbent, anti-Democrat, anti-tax, anti-big government manner? Were the wins *revolutionary*, a changing of the guard in terms of which party governs the state—from Democrats, whose party has governed the state for almost all of the 20th century, to Republicans, who hope to govern much of the 21st century? Or were they *evolutionary*, a single step in the long march of the Republican Party toward true competitiveness in a two-party state?

The results of most elections are to some extent reactionary, but 1994 was not a run-of-the-mill election. “Voters . . . revolted against Democratic-dominated national politics that seemed corrupt, divisive and slow to address the needs of ordinary citizens,” writes Stanley Greenberg, pollster for President Bill Clinton, in *The Polling Report*.² “Many voted to change a government that spends too much and accomplishes too little, and to shift the public discourse away from big government solutions.” Pollsters brought together after the election “agreed that a lot of votes were cast Nov. 8 in opposition to something—whether it was an individual, or the party in power, or even more broadly, the idea of government intruding into people’s lives.”³

Hal Hovey, former Illinois budget director, analyzed voters’ desire for change in the 1994 elections. In *State Policy Reports*, he writes, “If voters

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Karen Tan

N.C. House Speaker Harold Brubaker (R-Randolph) was among the big winners in the 1994 GOP landslide.

were unhappy with their lives and disillusioned with government, they may have concluded that change was desirable—not change in a particular direction, just change. This theory is supported by a poll showing that 53% of respondents explained election results as indicating ‘people wanted to see a change in Washington,’ which far outdistanced ‘voting against the President and his agenda’ (19%), and ‘because people wanted a more conservative Congress’ (12%).” Once voters decide they want change for change’s sake, according to this analysis, state policy does not matter. “It’s time for a change threatens incumbents regardless of what they do, so they can’t respond to the mandate except by finding their next job.”

Ran Coble, executive director of

the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, uses two television-based images to describe the reactionary nature of the 1994 election. “One is the Nike athletic shoe commercial image of ‘Just Do It.’ As one voter put it, ‘Just do it. Do it now, do it quickly, just do it.’ The problem is, they disagree over what ‘it’ is. Nevertheless, a big theme of the last elections was change, since more than two-thirds of independent voters believe the country is on the wrong

track. People want *change* and a government that works well—one that delivers services more efficiently and for less money. The second image that may capture the 1994 electorate is that of the television remote control, as in ‘I believe I’ll change stations—or political parties. And if Republicans don’t produce, I’ll switch

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—STANLEY GREENBERG
POLLSTER FOR PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON,
IN *THE POLLING REPORT*

"It was a very big victory for the Republican Party. We may well be looking at the complete political realignment of the once Democratic South to the now solidly Republican South."

—CHARLES BULLOCK
A PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA WHO STUDIES POLITICS
IN THE SOUTH

again in 1996." The long-term impact of the 1994 elections is unknown until the results of the next few elections can be compared.

The Republican Party hopes the 1994 elections represented a permanent revolution, and some analysts believe their hopes were realized. Prior to the election, Tom Vass, in an essay published in *The Charlotte Observer*, proclaimed, "If . . . the citizens of this state should happen to rouse themselves to political fury in order to deal the Democrats a death blow, it would be to a political oblivion that the Democrats richly deserve."⁵ Charles Bullock, a professor at the University of Georgia who studies politics in the South, says, "It was a very big victory for the Republican Party. We may well be looking at the complete political realignment of the once Democratic South to the now solidly Republican South." He cites North Carolina as an example of a state that's moving back towards a one-party system, this time controlled by the Republicans.

An editorial in *The Chapel Hill Herald* noted that "[f]ar from a ripple, the Nov. 8 election was a revolution."⁶ Former Governor Jim Martin, in an article published in *The Charlotte Observer* shortly after the election, wrote, "In the political story of the decade, voters swept out Democrat incumbents all across America. Power was purged. . . . Nowhere was this more dramatic than in North Carolina, where the House was captured outright for the first time since Reconstruction."⁷

In 1987, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research released its report *The Two-Party System in North Carolina: Do We Have One? And What Does It Mean?* The report found that, "A state dominated by Democrats since the turn of the cen-

tury, 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 of political winds abounds."⁸

Thad Beyle, a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, also thinks that the Republican gains in November were evolutionary, and says that none of this is surprising. "This was all happening prior to Watergate. In the late 1960s, after the Democrats passed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, the Republican Party began to gain momentum. But Watergate undid Republican gains in the South, and in 1976, North Carolinians supported fellow Southerner Jimmy Carter, the Democratic presidential nominee from Georgia," says Beyle. "It took the Reagan/Bush era to instill confidence in the Republican party again." In 1973, there were 50 Republican legislators in North Carolina. After Watergate, there were ten. When Reagan won a second term in 1984, the Republicans again held 50 seats in the 1985 state legislature. In 1995, they increased that number to 92.

"This potentially was one of the most significant elections," says Beyle. He notes several reasons for Republican gains. Low African-American turnout made it difficult for Democratic candidates

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—DEWEY GRANTHAM
PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY AND
AUTHOR OF *THE SOUTH IN
MODERN AMERICA*



“ . . . [M]any North Carolina whites have lost their commitment to the Democratic party but have not yet transferred their loyalty to the Republicans.”

REP. PAUL LUEBKE (D-DURHAM)

to win their elections. “And, the losses of the Democrats are tied to the decision to create minority race districts—the effect was to strip nearby districts of Democratic support.⁹ Also, voters in North Carolina are increasingly conservative. We’ve become a destination state for retirees; businesses that have moved to this state have brought with them employees who tend to vote Republican; and students since the Reagan years are increasingly more conservative, more Republican.” So Beyle is cautious when making long-term predictions about the significance of the gains. He says the 1996 elections will determine whether the 1994 Republican gains were reactionary, revolutionary, or evolutionary. “If Republican gains are stable or increase, that will validate the importance of the 1994 elections.”

Others assert that the gains of Republicans in November are being overestimated, not underestimated. In his book, *Tar Heel Politics*, Rep. Paul Luebke (D-Durham) writes that dealignment—not realignment—characterizes the tendencies of voters in North Carolina. “The gradual weakening of Democratic loyalties by white Southerners is known as dealignment. Dealignment means that many North Carolina whites have lost their commitment to the Democratic party, but have not yet transferred their loyalty to the Republicans.”¹⁰ Luebke asserts that Democratic politicians tend to act like generalists, failing to assert specific taxation and policy programs, and that they need to “draw clear distinctions between Democrats and Republicans. If dealigned white Tar Heel voters, typically registered Democrats who lack strong allegiance to ei-

ther political party, cannot easily see how they directly benefit from state government policies that are passed by the Democratic majority, they will vote against the Democrats.”¹¹ Luebke says, “That’s what happened in the 1994 election.” It is one of the reasons he has pushed hard in the 1995 session for repeal of the sales tax on food.

Dewey Grantham, professor emeritus at Vanderbilt University and author of *The South in Modern America*, comments, “We are not on the precipice of shifting to a one-party Republican South. The two-party system is an ingrained institution in national politics. It would be very hard for the Republicans to establish a monopoly like the Democrats enjoyed, even though they appear to be the dominant party.”

Republican Party Seeks Permanent Shift

As the Center’s 1987 report found, it is hard to downplay the significance of Republican gains in North Carolina over the past 30 years. The Republican campaign started at the national level. Before 1968, Republicans won only one presidential contest in North Carolina. Since 1968, Republican presidential candidates have won a plurality in North Carolina in all but one election, in 1976. (See Table 1 on pp. 86–87.) “The fall of the South as an assured stronghold of the Democratic party in presidential elections is one of the most significant developments in modern American politics,” write Earl and Merle Black in their book *The Vital South: How Presidents Are Elected*.¹²

In 1968, both U.S. Senators were Democrats. In 1972, Republican Jesse Helms won his first U.S. Senate race. He still holds that seat and Republican Lauch Faircloth holds the other North Carolina seat in the U.S. Senate. In November 1994, North Carolinians elected 12 members to the United States

Table 1. Election Results in North Carolina, 1968–1992**PRESIDENTIAL VOTING RESULTS***

Year	Democrat	Vote in N.C.	%	Republican	Vote in N.C.	%
1968	Hubert Humphrey	464,113	29.2	Richard Nixon	627,192	39.5
1972	George McGovern	427,981	28.6	Richard Nixon	1,043,162	69.8
1976	Jimmy Carter	927,365	55.3	Gerald Ford	741,960	44.2
1980	Jimmy Carter	875,635	47.2	Ronald Reagan	915,018	49.3
1984	Walter Mondale	824,287	37.9	Ronald Reagan	1,346,481	61.3
1988	Michael Dukakis	890,167	41.7	George Bush	1,237,258	58.0
1992	Bill Clinton	1,114,042	42.7	George Bush	1,134,661	43.4

U.S. SENATE VOTING RESULTS

Year	Democrat	Vote	%	Republican	Vote	%
1968	Sam Ervin	870,406	60.6	Robert Somers	566,934	39.4
1972	Nick Galifianakis	677,293	46.0	Jesse Helms	795,248	54.0
1978	John Ingram	516,663	45.5	Jesse Helms	619,151	54.5
1980	Robert Morgan	887,653	49.7	John East	898,064	50.3
1984	Jim Hunt	1,070,448	48.1	Jesse Helms	1,156,768	51.9
1986	Terry Sanford	823,662	51.8	James Broyhill	767,668	48.2
1990	Harvey Gantt	981,573	47.4	Jesse Helms	1,088,331	52.6
1992	Terry Sanford	1,194,015	46.3	Lauch Faircloth	1,297,892	50.3

* Third party candidates are omitted from this table. In 1968, George C. Wallace received 496,188 votes—31.2 percent of the North Carolina vote. In 1980, John B. Anderson received 52,800 votes—2.9 percent of the vote. In 1992, Ross Perot received 357,864 votes—13.7 percent of the North Carolina vote.

Source: The North Carolina Manual, Office of the Secretary of State.

House of Representatives: eight were Republicans, four were Democrats. The last time the Republicans held a majority in the N.C. Congressional Delegation was in 1869, when they held seven of ten seats. In 1867, Republicans held all seven seats.

In 1972, Jim Holshouser became the first Republican governor in North Carolina elected in the 20th century. Republican Jim Martin was elected governor in 1984, and he served two terms.

The 1994 election results provided the GOP with significant gains in the state legislature (+ 39 seats) and at the local level (+ 56 seats on boards of county commissioners). Tar Heel Republicans in the Senate picked up 13 seats (from 11 to 24), gaining more seats than in any other state senate in the country. In the North Carolina Senate, Democrats hold 26 of 50 seats—a vulnerable majority. On the House side, North Carolina Republicans

Table 1, *continued*

NUMBER OF N.C. DELEGATES TO U.S. HOUSE, BY PARTY

Year	Total # of Delegates	Democrat	Republican
1968	11	8	3
1970	11	7	4
1972	11	7	4
1974	11	7	4
1976	11	9	2
1978	11	9	2
1980	11	9	2
1982	11	9	2
1984	11	6	5
1986	11	8	3
1988	11	8	3
1990	11	8	3
1992	12	8	4
1994	12	4	8

GUBERNATORIAL VOTING RESULTS

Year	Democrat	Vote	%	Republican	Vote	%
1968	Bob Scott	821,233	52.7	Jim Gardner	737,075	47.3
1972	Hargrove "Skipper" Bowles	729,104	48.7	Jim Holshouser	767,470	51.3
1976	Jim Hunt	1,081,293	65.7	David Flaherty, Sr.	564,102	34.3
1980	Jim Hunt	1,143,143	62.3	Beverly Lake, Jr.	691,449	37.7
1984	Rufus Edmisten	1,011,209	45.6	Jim Martin	1,208,167	54.4
1988	Bob Jordan	957,687	43.9	Jim Martin	1,222,338	56.1
1992	Jim Hunt	1,368,246	52.7	Jim Gardner	1,121,955	43.2

picked up 26 seats (from 42 to 68), securing the third largest gain in any state house after New Hampshire (+ 28 seats) and Washington (+ 27 seats).¹³ With 68 of 120 seats, Republicans controlled the North Carolina House for the first time this century. "We had hoped to pick up 10 seats, recovering a few previously held by Republicans, for a total of 52: a new record, but short of 61 for a majority. Without losing a single Republican seat, 26 were taken from

the Democrats," writes former Governor Jim Martin.¹⁴ One commentator, in the magazine *Campaigns & Elections*, writes, "[T]he GOP's seizure of the . . . North Carolina House is the culmination of years of steady gains by state legislative Republicans."¹⁵ Overall, Republicans hold 92 of the 170 seats in the General Assembly.

And the march may not be over. Tres Glenn, former political director for the Republican Party in

North Carolina, predicts that this surge of Republican legislators has not peaked. "In the districts where Senator Jesse Helms, Governor Jim Martin, and President George Bush have run well, the Republican Party captured all but a handful of seats in 1994. By and large, in those districts, if we didn't get the seat, it was because we didn't contest the election." For example, in the 71st House district, Joe Mavretic lost in the Democratic primary, but Republicans didn't have a candidate running for that seat. "In the future, we will definitely contest those 10 seats," says Glenn.

Wayne McDevitt, chair of North Carolina's Democratic Party, thinks GOP gains will be hard to come by. "Voters want government to work better. Given the Republican leadership in the North Carolina House, there will be room for significant gains of the Democratic Party in 1996," says McDevitt.

Al Adams, a long-time Democratic Party activist, former legislator, and lobbyist, says, "It's much too early to tell how significant the November elections were. We're only three months into Republicans controlling the House. But, this is not a permanent 100- or 50-year change. The Democrats are more cohesive than ever."

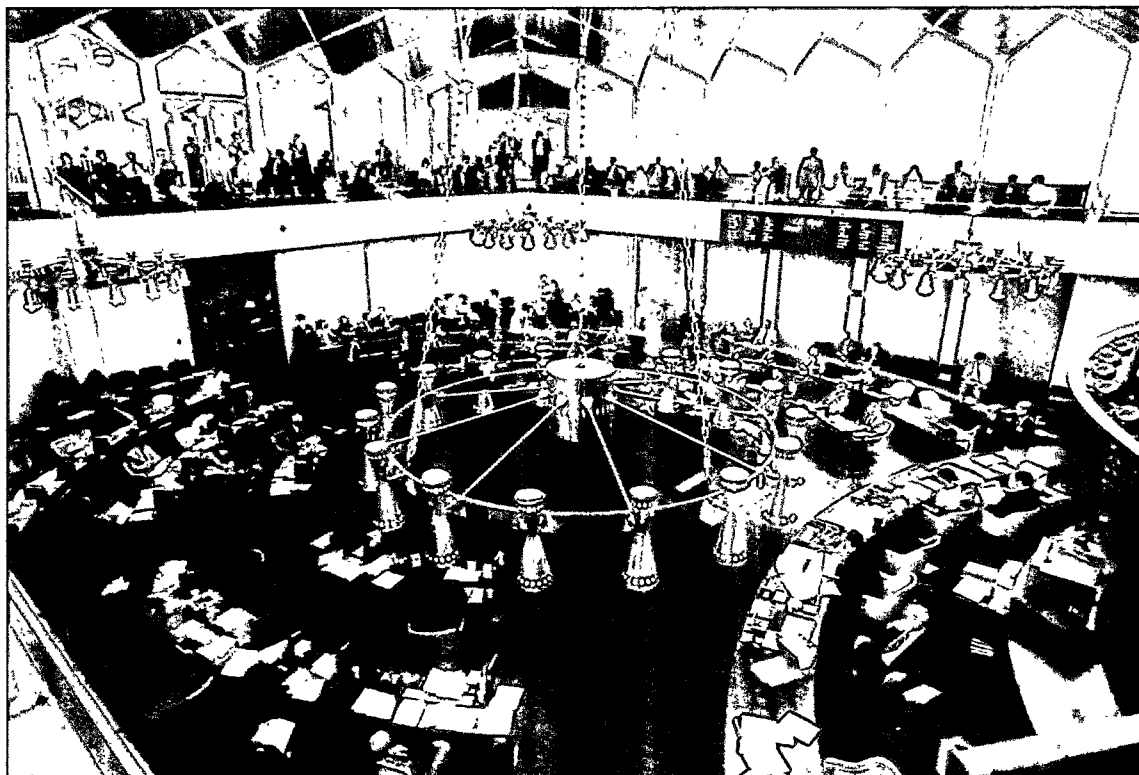
The judicial system in North Carolina, once devoid of Republicans, now has Republican judges

at all levels—from the Supreme Court down to district courts across the state. "After winning just three statewide judicial races this century, Republicans won all 12 statewide races they contested this year,"¹⁶ writes Joseph Neff of *The News & Observer* in Raleigh. Republicans now hold two seats on the North Carolina Supreme Court, two seats on the North Carolina Court of Appeals, six Superior Court seats, and 15 District Court seats.

On the local level, Republicans are making key gains as well. In 1992, Republicans controlled only 27 boards of county commissioners; after the November elections, they control 42. (See Table 2 on p. 89.)¹⁷ Of the 17 commissions where party control changed, 16 opted for Republican leadership. In 1992, Republicans held 29.2 percent of the seats on county commissions in North Carolina and Democrats held 70.8 percent. Republicans now hold 38.8 percent of the seats; Democrats hold 61.3 percent.

Republican voter registration is also on the rise. (See Table 3 on p. 91.) Over the last 10 years, Republican registration has substantially increased. In 1984, only 838,631 (25.6 percent of registered voters) North Carolinians were registered Republican; by 1994, the number of Republicans had increased to 1,191,878 (32.8 percent). At the same time, Democratic registration has declined:

A view of the N.C. Senate Chamber, still controlled by Democrats—but barely.



**Table 2. 1994 Election Results for Boards
of County Commissioners,* by Party, in N.C.**

	1992	1994
# of Republicans	161	217
% of Republicans	29.2%	38.8%
# of Boards of County Commissioners Controlled by Republicans	27	42
# of Democrats	390	343
% of Democrats	70.8%	61.3%
# of Boards of County Commissioners Controlled by Democrats	73	58

* There are 100 boards of county commissioners in North Carolina.

Source: The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners,
P. O. Box 1488, Raleigh, N.C. 27602
(919)715-2893

2,289,061 North Carolinians (70.0 percent) were registered Democrats in 1984; only 2,129,159 (58.6 percent) were registered in 1994.¹⁸

A poll conducted for a pro-business nonprofit called N.C. FREE (Forum for Research and Economic Education) found continued erosion in the number of North Carolinians who identify themselves as Democrats. "Those identifying with the Democratic Party dropped from 43 to 33 percent during the past four years, while Republican identification has remained at about 41 percent."¹⁹

The Republican Party's intention to effect a permanent realignment in North Carolina also is evidenced by their recruitment of minority candidates. Just as the South was once thought to be exclusively controlled by the Democrats, African Americans have predominantly voted Democratic and run for office as Democrats. However, in the 1995-96 session of the General Assembly, there are three African-American Republican legislators—Sen. Henry McKoy (R-Wake), Rep. Larry Linney (R-Buncombe), and Rep. Frances Cummings (R-Robeson). Rep. Cummings ran as a Democrat, but switched parties after the election. She is the first female African-American Republican ever to serve in the N.C. General Assembly. In the journal *South-*

ern Exposure, Ron Nixon writes, "Across the South a small but growing number of African Americans, left disenfranchised and alienated by the Democrats, are joining the Republican Party. . . . Today's black Republicans express deeply conservative values and ideas."²⁰

The Republican Contract

Republican gains at the national, state, and local level, in judicial races, and in registering voters are unprecedented in this state. The GOP presented voters with "A New Contract, by the People for the People of North Carolina." (See p. 90.) The eight-point document proposes an income-tax cut, state budget spending cuts, an end to the cap on the state's prison population, welfare reform, education governance changes, a citizen initiative and referendum process, veto power for the Governor, term limits, and changes in legislative procedure.

A potential problem for the Republicans is the shaky marriage between the Christian Right and the more moderate Republicans, says Charles Bullock. "To the extent that they beat up on each other instead of on the Democrats, the Democrats may find they have a new lease on life in 1996." How-

A New Contract

by the People, for the People

Republican Reform Agenda

Republican candidates for election to the North Carolina General Assembly in the general election to be held on November 8, 1994, have ratified a New Contract with the People of North Carolina, to be introduced as legislation in the 1995 session of the North Carolina General Assembly.

A REAL INCOME TAX CUT of not less than \$200 million in 1995 for the working people of North Carolina and the rejection of any new taxes.

REAL SPENDING REFORM that includes the passage of the Taxpayers Protection Act which limits the future growth of state spending to the rate of inflation plus an adjustment for population growth and creates an Emergency Reserve Fund and prohibits unfunded state mandates.

REAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM that removes the cap on the state's prison population; that requires the construction of additional no-frills prison units to meet existing demands; and that examines limits to judicial appeals by death row inmates.

REAL WELFARE REFORM that denies benefits to unwed mothers and fathers who fail to cooperate in establishing the parenthood of children born out of wedlock; that extends Workfare programs to cover all able bodied adult recipients of social services benefits; and that provides for a Learnfare program to encourage youthful welfare dependents to take advantage of public education opportunities so that they can become productive adult citizens.

REAL EDUCATION REFORM that grants effective control of public schools to local boards of education; that reduces the responsibilities and size of the State Department of Public Instruction bureaucracy; and that earmarks savings realized by this restructuring for use by local school boards to pay for textbooks, supplies, and other classroom materials.

REAL EMPOWERMENT REFORM that enables citizens of North Carolina, through voter initiative, to place issues on the statewide ballot as constitutional amendments.

REAL GOVERNANCE REFORM that calls for a 1995 popular referendum on granting veto power to the Governor; and that establishes term limits for members of the N.C. General Assembly and the state's congressional delegation.

REAL LEGISLATIVE REFORM that upon petition of a majority of members of the House or Senate, requires that legislation held in committee be brought to the floor of that body for a vote by its members.

Table 3. Statewide Voter Registration by Party, 1974–1994

Year	Total Registration	Democrats	% of Voters	Republicans	% of Voters
1974	2,279,646	1,654,304	72.6%	537,568	23.6%
1984	3,270,933	2,289,061	70.0%	838,631	25.6%
1994	3,635,875	2,129,159	58.6%	1,191,878	32.8%

Source: The State Board of Elections; *The Two-Party System in North Carolina: Do We Have One? What Does It Mean?* N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, December 1987.

ever, if Republicans successfully move their agenda and gain the additional seats they anticipate in 1996, the GOP's dominance in North Carolina will not be just a blip on the radar screen in the battle for political control of the Old North State.

"It's no surprise that the Democrats have lots of work to do," says McDevitt, the state Democratic Party chairman. "In the 1994 elections, the Democrats nationally allowed the Republicans to define the issues. In 1996, we will define what it is to be a Democrat in North Carolina. We will articulate our message clearly." Will the Democrats have their own contract in 1996? "Unlikely," McDevitt notes. "People are concerned about the issues—children,

public safety, education, jobs, cutting taxes for working families. The Democrats have a very good record of success on those issues. Voters want you to tell them what you're gonna do, do it, and then tell them what you did. That's our contract. That's what we'll do in 1996."

Keith Miles writes in *Southern Exposure*, "Both parties have tremendous challenges before them: the Republicans in translating a seductive philosophy into concrete policy without alienating their new constituency [white Southerners]; the Democrats in devising and articulating a new platform that recognizes and addresses the current drift to the right without losing their liberal and minority base.

What happens between now and the 1996 elections will determine whether there will be real realignment in the South."²¹

Women Increase Power

Even though women lost three seats in the November elections, they increased their power this session when they were given the plum committee chairs in both the N.C. House and Senate for the first time. There were only two women legislators in



Rep. Frances Cummings (R-Robeson), one of three African-American, Republican legislators.

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—KEITH MILES,
IN *SOUTHERN EXPOSURE*

1971; now there are 28. Nationally, North Carolina ranks 36th in terms of the number of women serving in its legislature.²²

Although last session a record 31 women served in the legislature, women this session chair some of the most powerful committees. For example, Democrats selected Sen. Beverly Perdue (D-Craven) to co-chair the Senate Appropriations Committee, while Republicans chose Rep. Theresa Esposito (R-Forsyth) to co-chair the House Appropriations Committee. In addition, Rep. Connie Wilson (R-Mecklenburg) co-chairs the House Finance Committee, through which all major tax cut legislation passed. In the Center's biennial survey of legislators, the

Appropriations and Finance Committees again were named the most powerful in each house, in voting by all legislators, lobbyists, and capital news correspondents. (See Table 4 on p. 93.) Overall, women chaired 15 committees and subcommittees this session. Women also secured other important leadership posts. Rep. Carolyn Russell (R-Wayne) is the Speaker Pro Tempore of the House, while Sen. Betsy Cochrane (R-Davie) is Minority Leader in the Senate.

"Chairing the money committees in the General Assembly is definitely a political stepping stone. The next step up for women could be the Speaker's Office and President Pro Tem of the Senate. Or, you may see them choosing to pursue elected positions in the executive branch—Lieutenant Governor and Governor, for example," says the Center's Coble. "The first woman to step into one of these positions is very likely to come from this group of women legislators."

Sen. Perdue says, "Women have more clout this session than in 1993-94, but it is not just because they are women. It's all about hard work. With the tough policy issues and the incredible amount of fiscal responsibility facing legislators, positions are awarded based on individual accomplishments and commitment. Women have to be as good as or better than their counterparts."



Control of powerful legislative committees is a sure sign of increasing power of women in the General Assembly. Rep. Theresa Esposito (R-Forsyth), left, is co-chair of the House Appropriations Committee, while Sen. Beverly Perdue (D-Craven), right, co-chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Steve Tuttle, in N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry's magazine, *North Carolina*, writes, "Behind every man in the 1995 General Assembly, there is a woman he must address as 'Madam Chairman,' or so it seems in this session of the legislature where women are heading up many of the most important committees. . . . In some cases it's seniority that has propelled the women to the front ranks, in other cases it's a result of the Republican takeover of the House."²³

Power of African Americans Declines

While women's power has increased, the influence of African-American legislators has declined. Because of the Republican takeover of the House by a 68-52 Republican margin, Rep. Dan Blue (D-Wake) lost his position as Speaker of the House. With him went the Democratic chairs of 11 house committees and subcommittees. This session, the only African American chairing a House committee or subcommittee is Rep. Frances Cummings (R-Robeson), who chairs the Education Subcommittee on Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Education.

The number of African Americans elected to the General Assembly has significantly increased over the past 25 years—from two seats in 1971 to 24 seats in 1995. "Even though we only lost one seat in the November elections, blacks have less clout this session than they had in 1993-94 because of the Republican sweep," says Rep. H.M. "Mickey" Michaux (D-Durham). "In the environment that exists in the House—blacks control 17 seats, Republicans control 68 seats—we have found it very difficult to garner the influence we once had, and losing key leadership positions hasn't helped."

The Senate, however, is a different story. Sen. Frank Ballance (D-Warren), Majority Whip and chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety, has the potential to become the most powerful African American in the legislature. A slim 26-24 Democratic majority exists in the Senate, making African Americans powerful as

Table 4. The Most Powerful Committees in the 1993-94 General Assembly

The Six Most Powerful Senate Committees

1. Appropriations
2. Finance
3. Judiciary I
4. Education/Higher Education
5. Rules and Operations of the Senate
6. Judiciary II

The Six Most Powerful House Committees

1. Appropriations
2. Finance
3. Education
4. Constitutional Amendments and Referenda
5. Judiciary I
6. Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

Source: Article II: A Guide to the 1995-96 N.C. Legislature, N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. Based on surveys sent to all state legislators, lobbyists, and capital news correspondents.

a group. If the seven black senators choose to abstain from a vote, the Democrats could lose a critical bill.

Lots of Newcomers—But Not a Record Number

"One of the things you notice most about the 1995-96 legislature is its inexperience," says the Center's Coble. There are 54 newcomers in the 1995 General Assembly. Nine of these, however, have previously served in the N.C. legislature—Senators Hamilton Horton, Tony Rand, and Thomas Sawyer and Representatives Cary Allred, Monroe Buchanan, Jim Crawford, Bill Hiatt, Bill Hurley, and Gene Wilson.

Of the 54 newcomers, 34—more than 60 percent—have no prior elected experience. Seventy-nine of the 170 legislators are in their first or second terms, and the average length of service for all legislators is 7.9 years. Thirty-seven incumbents lost their seats in the 1994 elections.

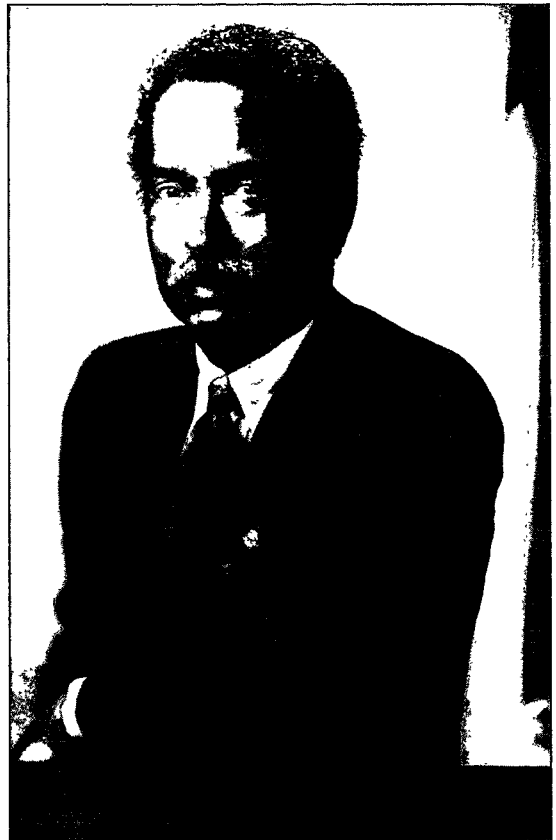
"The conventional wisdom is that turnover in the 1994 elections was the highest ever; it's not true," says Coble. "In 1975, 70 new members were elected; in 1985, 57 new members were elected; and

**Rep. Mickey Michaux (D-Durham)
observes that Republican control
means African Americans have
lost clout in the House. . .**

this time there are 54 new members. Over the last 20 years, the average turnover rate in the House has been 27 percent, while in the Senate it's been 20 percent." This year, turnover was 33 percent in the House and 30 percent in the Senate. "We've got turnover without term limits."

Trends in Legislators' Occupations

The Center's guide to the legislature, *Article II*, also tracks the occupations of legislators. This session, the number of retirees in the legislature is up while the number of lawyers is down. The number of retired persons serving in the General Assembly has increased markedly in the past 20 years: in 1975, 1993, and 1995, retired persons held 7, 32, and 37 seats, respectively. The number of lawyers, on the other hand, has steadily declined from 68 in 1971 to 32 in 1995. (See Table 5 on p. 95.)



"The increase in the number of retired persons serving in the legislature doesn't surprise me, considering that retirement affords a person both time and flexibility," says Rep. Willis Brown (D-Harnett), a retired attorney. "Employment responsibilities generally don't permit the extended absences that are required now that sessions have become so lengthy and time-consuming." The decreasing number of lawyers, he says, can be attributed to three factors: first, the demanding nature of the practice of law; second, the extended absences from their positions required because of the length of legislative sessions; and third, lawyers don't tend to retire as early as most businessmen, choosing to practice until later in life.

. . . But in the Senate, the story is different. African Americans, led by Sen. Frank Ballance (D-Warren) remain a significant voting bloc.

Table 5. Demographics and Occupations of the N.C. Legislature, 1973-1995

Demographics	1973		1975		1993		1995	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
African Americans	3	2%	6	4%	25	15%	24	14%
Native Americans	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Women	9	5%	15	9%	31	18%	28	17%
Democrats	120	71%	160	94%	117	69%	78	46%
Republicans	50	29%	10	6%	53	31%	92	54%
New members elected	65	38%	70	41%	50	29%	54	32%
Occupation*	1973		1975		1993		1995	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Banking	3	2%	5	3%	6	4%	3	2%
Business/Sales	41	24%	49	29%	46	27%	46	27%
Construction/ Contracting	0	0%	2	1%	4	2%	7	4%
Education	12	7%	19	11%	21	12%	19	11%
Farming	17	10%	22	13%	19	11%	16	9%
Health Care	3	2%	4	2%	13	8%	8	5%
Homemaker	3	2%	4	2%	3	2%	3	2%
Insurance	12	7%	17	10%	11	7%	12	7%
Law	56	33%	51	30%	39	23%	32	19%
Legislator	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	4	2%
Manufacturing	6	4%	5	3%	0	0%	2	1%
Minister	4	2%	2	1%	3	2%	3	2%
Real Estate	7	4%	14	8%	21	12%	19	11%
Retired	6	4%	7	4%	32	19%	37	22%
Self-employed	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%	1	1%

* Because many legislators list more than one occupation, in the occupation table, numbers do not add up to the total number of legislators (170) nor do percents add up to 100.

Source: *Article II: A Guide to the 1995-96 N.C. Legislature*,
N.C. Center for Public Policy Research.

Committee Assignments and Bills Introduced

A supplement to the Center's legislative guide lists committee assignments for all 170 legislators. The Senate cut the number of its standing committees from 21 to 14, while the House reduced the number of its committees from 24 to 21.

For members who served in the 1993-94 General Assembly, *Article II* also shows the number of bills they introduced and, of those, the number that were adopted, ratified, and passed as part of another bill. Sen. Bill Martin (D-Guilford) introduced the most bills, sponsoring 239. Rep. George Miller (D-Durham) introduced the most bills in the House, sponsoring 94. For the most part, the number of bills introduced during the 1993-94 session was inflated by the large number of bills recommended by the Government Performance Audit Committee (GPAC)—an independent audit of state government conducted in 1992.

This session, Speaker of the House Harold Brubaker spearheaded a successful effort to limit the number of bills a representative can introduce in the 1995-96 session to 10 bills. This limit does not apply to local bills, bills recommended by study commissions, joint resolutions, or House resolutions, and a member may assign his or her unused quota to another member. The Senate has no such limit.

Conclusion

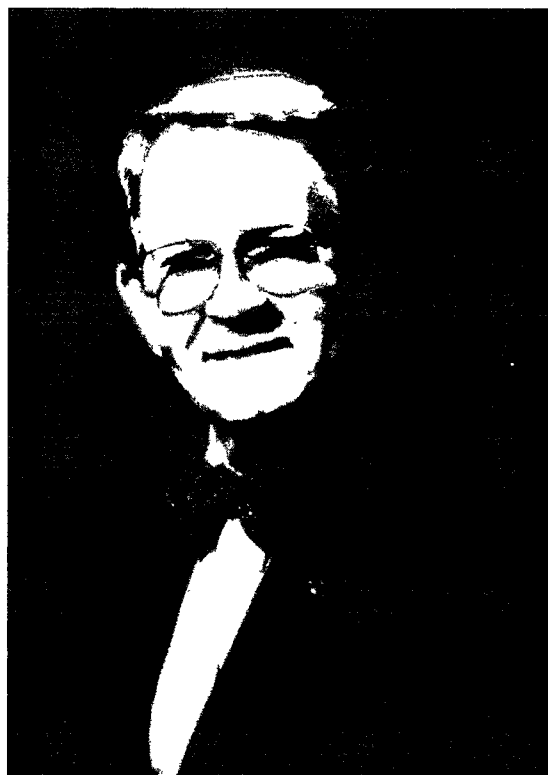
The demographic trends reported in *Article II* enable policymakers, the media, and interested citizens to assess the impact of elections by analyzing different trends: gains and losses of political parties, women, and minority groups; turnover rates; and, the occupation and education of our leaders in the General Assembly. The 1996 elections are eagerly anticipated because they will determine whether the previous gains of the Republican party in North Carolina were an aberration or whether the GOP has attained the status of a competitive party

all the way down the ballot. The prevalence of Republican wins in 1994 at all levels of government—national, state, and local—and the magnitude of their gains indicate that the Republicans likely will hold on to many of the seats in the 1996 elections.

Republicans used their contract with the people as a mechanism for developing a party platform and attracting voters, which has increased the significance of party affiliation in North Carolina. "The New Contract agenda began as a campaign gimmick last fall when almost no one thought it would make a difference," writes Jack Betts of *The Charlotte Observer*.²⁴ "Today, it represents what may become [House Speaker Harold] Brubaker's legacy to North Carolina—the imposition of a form of parliamentary government. If Brubaker's idea takes root and grows into the norm, future campaigns will turn on the notion that when you vote for a certain legislator, you vote for a program he has agreed to support and an ideology that politician will work to adopt."

Women legislators increased their power by securing key leadership positions. Selected in both houses to chair the money committees, the women in these leadership positions include Democrats and Republicans. Whatever the next political stepping stone for women may be—be it in the legislative or executive branch of state government—it seems

Rep. Willis Brown (D-Harnett), a retired attorney, is among an increasing number of retirees in the General Assembly.



likely that the women from this group of legislators will continue to emerge as strong candidates and capable leaders.

And, analysis of *Article II* reveals that the large amount of time it takes to serve in the General Assembly is affecting the occupational trends of legislators. Retirees and people with more flexible occupations can afford to devote long periods of time to legislative duties. Those whose occupational duties are harder to schedule around legislative duties find it harder to serve in the General Assembly. Thus, the lengthy sessions have an impact on who can serve in the General Assembly, changing the nature of what was conceived as a citizen legislature.

Article II

Article II, the Center's legislative handbook, contains profiles of each member of the legislature, including photos, business and home addresses, telephone/fax numbers, district served, counties in that district, number of terms served, and educational and occupational backgrounds. For members who served last session, the guide lists votes on 14 of the most significant bills in 1993-94, effectiveness rankings since 1983, and five selected bills they introduced. Also included are demographics for the General Assembly since 1975, a list of the 50 most influential lobbyists, and a supplement that contains committee assignments by member and by committee.

The guide is available for \$22.50 from the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602. Phone: (919) 832-2839. FAX: (919) 832-2847. ☐☐

FOOTNOTES

¹ David Rice, "Tarheel Revolution: GOP presents the voters with an eight-point contract for legislative change," *Winston-Salem Journal*, Winston-Salem, N.C., Jan. 22, 1995, p. A1. See also Editorial, "The Republican revolution," *The Chapel Hill Herald*, Durham, N.C., Mar. 9, 1995, p. 4. In September 1994, the chairman of the state Republican Party, Jack Hawke, predicted that his party would pick up ten seats in the state House. See David Rice, "GOP awaits Clinton backlash," *Winston-Salem Journal*, Winston-Salem, N.C., Sept. 18, 1994, p. E1. Party chairmen are prone to overestimate their expected gains when predicting the results of an election. However, in November 1994, the GOP picked up 26 seats in the N.C. House of Representatives.

² Stanley B. Greenberg, "Election of 1994: Revolt Against Politics," *The Polling Report*, Vol. 10, No. 22, Washington, D.C., Nov. 21, 1994, p. 1.

³ Howard Goldberg, "Polarization called key to '94 elections," *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Nov. 19, 1994, p. A6.

⁴ *State Policy Reports*, Vol. 12, Issue 23, Dec. 1994, p. 9.

⁵ Tom Vass, "North Carolina's 100-year legacy of one-party rule," *The Charlotte Observer*, Charlotte, N.C., Nov. 3, 1994, p. A19.

⁶ Editorial, *The Chapel Hill Herald*, see note 1 above.

⁷ James G. Martin, "At last, a 2-party South," *The Charlotte Observer*, Charlotte, N.C., Nov. 20, 1994, p. D4 [emphasis in original].

⁸ Jack Betts & Vanessa Goodman, *The Two-Party System in North Carolina: Do We Have One? And What Does It Mean?*, N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, Raleigh, N.C., Dec. 1987, p. i.

⁹ Rep. Paul Luebke, in his book *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities*, cautions that two points remain important to African Americans in their continued advocacy for minority race districts, despite Republican gains. First, white Democrats needed to and did develop a political program that appealed to white voters because in the areas of the state where a strong two-party system exists, they could no longer rely on the party loyalty of blacks to win seats. Second, African Americans maintain their right to elect candidates of their own choosing. See Paul Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1990, p. 120. The result of increased African-American representation in the General Assembly may be the loss of indirect representation in the form of white Democratic legislators—as allies to black Democratic legislators and advocates for African-American constituents.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹² Earl Black & Merle Black, *The Vital South: How Presidents Are Elected*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, p. 4.

¹³ Information provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

¹⁴ Martin, see note 7 above.

¹⁵ John F. Persinos, "The GOP Farm Team: Republican Gains in State Legislatures Could Pave the Way for Bigger Electoral Victories in the Future," *Campaigns & Elections*, Washington, D.C., Mar. 1995, p. 30.

¹⁶ Joseph Neff, "Merit selection of judges may gain momentum," *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Nov. 15, 1994, p. A3.

¹⁷ Information provided by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

¹⁸ Voter registration information provided by the State Board of Elections and from the Center's report *The Two-Party System in North Carolina: Do We Have One? And What Does It Mean?*, table 1, p. 3.

¹⁹ "Tar Heels worried about crime," *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Mar. 18, 1995, p. A3. "The statewide survey of 800 registered voters was conducted . . . between Feb. 27-March 3 by Marketing Research Institute, a veteran polling firm located in Pensacola, Fla. The margin of error was 3.5 percentage points." The poll looked at voter identification with political parties since 1991. "[T]he survey found a moderate shift to the right by North Carolinians."

²⁰ Ron Nixon, "Plantation Politics," *Southern Exposure*, Institute for Southern Studies, Durham, N.C., Spring 1995, pp. 27-29.

²¹ D. Keith Miles, "Whatever happened to the Southern Democrats? They Turned Republican," *Southern Exposure*, Institute for Southern Studies, Durham, N.C., Spring 1995, p. 39.

²² Information provided by the Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

²³ Steve Tuttle, "'Madam Chairman' Today, Governor Tomorrow?" *North Carolina*, North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry, Raleigh, N.C., Apr. 1995, p. 41.

²⁴ Jack Betts, "Thrust for change," *The Charlotte Observer*, Charlotte, N.C., Apr. 9, 1995, p. C1.