



Mission Statement

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to the goals of a better-informed public and a more effective, accountable, and responsive government. The Center identifies public policy issues facing North Carolina and enriches the dialogue among citizens, the media, and policymakers. Based on our research, the Center makes recommendations for improving the way government serves the people of this state. In all our efforts, the Center values (a) reliable and objective research as a basis for analyzing public policy; (b) independence from partisan bias and political ideology; (c) the richness of the state's diverse population, and (d) a belief in the importance of citizen involvement in public life.

About the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research was founded in 1977 and is still one of only six independent, state-level policy centers in the country. Our founders believed that most of the important issues in future decades would be decided at the state level, and they've been proved right over the 31 years of our existence. The Center is governed by a 23-member Board of Directors set up to mirror the population of North Carolina in its proportions of men and women; African Americans, Native Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics; Democrats, Republicans, and Independents; from the east, west, and Piedmont. With our Board of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, there are no sacred cows in what we should study, and there are no predetermined results.

Reports and Research by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research

The Future of Community Colleges – This 228-page report examines key issues facing North Carolina's 58 community colleges. It highlights the colleges' important role in meeting work force shortages – especially of teachers, nurses, and biotechnology workers. The report also recommends ways to improve financial aid for community college students, since only 23 of the 58 colleges offer access to all of the federal loan programs. A video of the Center's public forum on the future of community colleges is also available.

A Citizen's Guide to the Legislature – Every other year, the Center publishes *Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature*. It is a resource for citizens to use in contacting their legislators and getting involved in public policy issues in North Carolina. This guide also is a resource to the news media in profiling legislators and analyzing trends in the legislature. The guide contains profiles on each of the 170 members of the General Assembly, including photos; legislative, business, home and e-mail addresses; telephone and fax numbers; committee assignments; committee meeting schedules; number of terms served in the legislature; and each legislator's educational and occupational background. For members who served in the previous session, the guide lists five bills they introduced, their votes on 12 of the most important bills during the previous session, rankings of attendance and roll call voting participation, and a history of rankings of each legislator's effectiveness since 1985.

13 Ways of Looking at a State Lottery – This study examines the pros and cons of lotteries in other states and answers 13 questions about lotteries with the Center's research findings. The Center's study shows four pluses for lotteries, five minuses, and four areas where the research findings are inconclusive.

The Statewide UNC Board of Governors: Its Selection, Powers, and Relationship to the 16 Local Campus Boards of Trustees – This 402-page report opens with a history of the UNC Board of Governors, which governs all 16 public universities. It describes the process of the legislature's selection of the Board and the Board's composition. It then examines the allocation of powers between the statewide board and the local campus boards of trustees. The Center concludes that the legislature should relinquish the task of choosing the University system's Board of Governors and give that responsibility to the Governor, as is done in 46 other states. The Center's report also says that the Board itself needs to fulfill its statutory responsibility for long-range planning in higher education in coordination with the community colleges and private colleges and universities. And, it warns that seven tuition increases in the last eight years invite a lawsuit under the State Constitutional mandate that a university education "as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense."

High School Dropouts – The Center's study of ways to count and prevent high school dropouts led the 2007 legislature to appropriate \$7 million in dropout prevention grants and create a new Joint legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation Rates. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction also is now using a more accurate method of counting and reporting dropout rates, as we recommended

The Shortage of Teachers in North Carolina – Currently, there are 86,000 teachers in North Carolina public schools. Yet, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction says we're going to need 100,000 new teachers over the next 10 years, or 10,000 new teachers a year. However, all the state's public and private colleges combined only produce 3,100 new teachers each year. Only about 2,200 of those 3,100 graduates accept jobs in North Carolina, and only about 1,400 are still teaching two years later. The Center makes recommendations to address this teacher shortage.

The State's Record on Voter Turnout – North Carolina ranks 34th in turnout of the voting age population. The Center examined the state's voter turnout record since 1960, compared North Carolina's election laws with the 49 other states, and documented the voting methods used in all 100 N.C. counties. The Center outlines a series of reforms to boost voter turnout and to make sure state elections officials can produce an accurate count once ballots are cast.

Safe at Home? Fighting Family Violence in North Carolina – This Center study documents more than 70 domestic murders a year in each of the last three years. However, the Center found conviction rates for domestic violence charges range from a low of 12.7 percent in Avery County to a high of 56.9 percent in Bertie and Hertford counties. Meanwhile, demands for services have jumped almost 27 percent over the last five years. For four years in a row, the legislature has enacted some of our recommendations to address domestic violence. It enacted stiffer penalties for domestic violence offenders, allowed confidential name changes to protect victims, required reporting on domestic violence homicides, and provided \$894,000 for community based programs for domestic violence victims.

Charter Schools – This is an evaluation of North Carolina’s experience with charter schools since 1996. The Center’s research found that charter schools did not perform as well as regular public schools on end-of-grade tests on reading, writing, or math. The Center also found a lack of racial balance, with more than 26 of 99 charter schools having more than 80 percent nonwhite students – despite a state law requiring that charter schools must reasonably reflect the racial make-up of their local school districts. Finally, the Center found too many charter schools had problems with financial management, with the State Board of Education having revoked 27 charters since 1997.

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

Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy Outcomes: From Disparity to Parity – According to the U.S. Census, North Carolina’s population is now 72.1 percent white, 21.6 percent African American, 4.7 percent Hispanic, 1.4 percent Asian, and 1.2 percent Native American. The census indicates that all minorities combined – African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans together – now account for nearly one-third (28.9 percent) of the state’s population. In a report unprecedented in scope, the Center examined racial disparities across a broad range of indicators and found North Carolina minorities trail whites in education, economic well-being, housing, voter participation, Internet access, health, and criminal justice outcomes. The study offered a series of eight recommendations to address these disparities.

Rankings of Legislators’ Effectiveness, Attendance, and Roll Call Voting Participation – As part of our goal of enhancing government accountability and educating the public, the Center publishes biennial rankings of the effectiveness of all 170 members of the N.C. General Assembly. These rankings are based on surveys of all legislators, all registered lobbyists based in North Carolina, and all capital news media correspondents. We also publish rankings of legislators based on their attendance and their participation in roll call votes. The rankings of attendance and voting participation tell citizens and voters how often their legislator was there to represent them. The effectiveness rankings tell citizens how effective their legislator was when he or she was there. We hope both are helpful to citizens in evaluating the performance of their legislators.

Rankings of the Most Influential Lobbyists – Every other year, the Center releases rankings of *The Most Influential Lobbyists in the N.C. General Assembly*. These rankings tell citizens what key interests have clout with legislators, as well as who is *not* represented in the legislature. They shed light on what is often an invisible process and illustrate changes in the lobbying profession itself.

Reorganizing Higher Education in North Carolina: What History Tells Us About Our Future – This report details the history of how the UNC system was formed and what our state has learned about higher education governance since its restructuring in 1971.

N.C. Focus – *Focus* is a unique 817-page anthology on state government, state politics, and public policy issues that follows the organization of the state Constitution. *Focus* is used in social studies classes in our state’s public high schools and in college and university classes on state and local government.

I’d like to order the following:

- The Future of Community Colleges in North Carolina (\$28)
- Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature* (\$25)
- 13 Ways of Looking at a State Lottery (\$20)
- The Statewide UNC Board of Governors: Its Selection, Powers, and Relationship to the 16 Local Boards of Trustees* (\$35)
- High School Dropouts (\$20)
- The Shortage of Teachers & Aligning the Federal “No Child Left Behind” Act with the State Accountability Program (\$10)
- The State’s Record on Voter Turnout (\$20)
- Domestic Violence in N.C. (\$20)
- Evaluation of Charter Schools in N.C. (\$20)
- Economic Development in Eastern North Carolina (\$20)
- Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy Outcomes in N.C. (\$20)
- Rankings of Legislators’ Effectiveness, Attendance, and Roll Call Voting Participation (\$10)
- Rankings of the Most Influential Lobbyists in the N.C. General Assembly (\$10)
- Reorganizing Higher Education in North Carolina – What History Tells Us About Our Future* (\$20)
- North Carolina Focus: An Anthology of State Government, State Politics, and Policy* (\$36)

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