



Legislative Newsletter

Issue 399

November 4, 2011

Taking Political Aim on NC Gubernatorial Race: As the national focus turns to North Carolina for the 2012 presidential race, Democratic Gov. Beverly Perdue may become the most targeted gubernatorial candidate in the country. So says Jay Parmley, executive director of the state Democratic Party. "This is really ground zero for everything in 2012," Parmley told Cumberland County Democratic Men's Club recently.

Parmley said hundreds of paid staffers for President Obama's re-election campaign will converge across North Carolina next year. His party's national convention will be in Charlotte, further bolstering the state's limelight in the presidential race. Parmley said Perdue, a Democrat elected in 2008, will be heavily targeted by GOP interests because she has tried to block some of the "foolishness" passed by the Republican-led General Assembly this year. Controversial bills cited by Parmley included abortion restrictions, voter photo identification and a marriage amendment referendum set for May.

For Obama to win re-election, he will need to reclaim North Carolina's 15 electoral votes, Parmley said. He'll have a tougher time here and in other battleground states, Parmley said, "because he is an incumbent, quite frankly." Parmley said Perdue will spin her record on education and economic development on the stump next year. "I think the voters will understand she is fighting for them," Parmley said.

Meantime, officials with the N.C. Republican Party said jobs will be the primary campaign issue, and they believe their party offers a better economic vision and plan. "Perdue's failed record on spending and lack of job creation will be the foremost reasons why North Carolina 'swings' back to the Republican Party in 2012," Rob Lockwood of the state GOP said, according to The Fayetteville Observer.

Tax Hike Referenda Update: Officials in two counties with tax referenda this year are clashing with critics over the definition endorsement. Both Orange and Durham counties have a quarter-cent sales tax on Tuesday's ballot. Durham has another half-cent tax proposal to fund transit projects.

A flier on the Durham Public Schools website says, "Quarter Cent Sales Tax = Support for Durham Schools." "Any reader of the flier certainly will understand that DPS supports the sales-

tax increase," Bakst said. DPS does not plan to remove the flier from its website. DPS Superintendent Eric Becoats said the flier is meant to be educational. "The verbiage on the ballot does not mention public schools and can be a source of confusion," Becoats said. "It is our intention to inform voters that this particular sales and use tax revenue, if approved, would be directed entirely to public education as committed by our county commissioners."

Because the 2010 law is so new, there is no case law defining what it means to endorse, said Frayda Bluestein, professor of public law and government in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government. Local governments must have decided they need funding for a reason, however, which is why they've asked voters for it by putting it on the ballot, Bluestein said. "It can't be that they have to be completely neutral because they have decided this

Orange County has allocated \$84,500 in taxpayer money to put the sales tax on the ballot, including \$50,000 to tell voters how it would benefit residents. Durham's referendum campaigns are bankrolled by two private committees, which together have spent about \$8,311. County officials defend their campaigns as educational.

Anti-Wall Street Protests Costing Cash: The cost of a constant police presence at protests in Raleigh and Charlotte inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement is beginning to worry some officials. The 24-7 police presence has reached a cost topping \$1,000 per day in both cities. That's hard to justify in bleak economic times, some city officials say. "Those folks have the right to protest and I would stand in front of a freight train to protect their First Amendment rights, but at some point we have to say look, y'all come back during the day," Charlotte City Councilman Andy Dulin said. Some protesters, though, say their gatherings are peaceful and the costs of the 24-hour police protection are unnecessary expenses.

Redistricting Reaction: A group of former and current state legislators, former congressmen, local government officials and voters -- most or all Democrats -- has filed the first lawsuit challenging new congressional and legislative districts. The plaintiffs, represented by former Deputy Attorney General Eddie Speas, say the maps should be thrown out because of hundreds of split precincts, divided counties and the use of race as the predominant factor in the drawing of the districts. The lawsuit contends that the split precincts, divided counties and racially gerrymandered districts violate the state and federal constitutions. The lawsuit was filed in Wake County Superior Court. Among the plaintiffs in the lawsuit are former congressmen Bob Etheridge and Tim Valentine, current Democratic legislators Alma Adams, Linda Garrou, Don Vaughn and Rodney Moore, and former legislators Margaret Dickson, Phil Baddour and Alice Underhill.

Tuition Hikes Eyed at UNC: North Carolina's public universities are poised for a potentially fractious debate over tuition and fee increases this year that could be significantly higher than the 6.5 percent cap imposed by the University of North Carolina system. In an October memo to campus leaders, the UNC system issued guidelines for next year's tuition requests and reiterated the 6.5 percent cap. However, the guidelines also said campuses could consider one-time adjustments to "catch up" to the tuition levels at similar public peer universities across the

nation. Now, a tuition advisory group at UNC-Chapel Hill is considering a recommendation to raise tuition and fees by up to \$2,800 for in-state undergraduates -- a hike of nearly 40 percent, if enacted in one year. N.C. State University's advisory group has endorsed a plan to raise tuition by \$330 for in-state undergraduates, a 6.4 percent increase, and \$660 for graduate and out-of-state students. But provost Warwick Arden said the university may consider a larger increase if UNC system leaders give the green light. Any tuition plan would have to be approved by that individual campus Board of Trustees, the UNC system's Board of Governors and, ultimately, the state legislature.

Military Might in the NC Economy: North Carolina needs to continue developing its military and defense economy, Gov. Beverly Perdue said Thursday. The governor, speaking at a forum on the military economy at Fort Bragg, said the state should consider its next steps following base realignment moves that brought Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command to Fort Bragg. The military ranks second only to agriculture among the state's industries, Perdue said. More than \$23 billion in military spending accounts for 7 percent of the state's economy, she said. The

Although military dollars are shrinking, opportunity exists in repairing and renovating war-worn military equipment, she said. "Some of us believe we need to focus more aggressively on this cluster," she said. The state still has shortcomings with schools and infrastructure around military installations, she said. In some cases, schools and roads are overcrowded, partially due to military growth. Fayetteville's airport does not have direct flights to Washington, D.C., to serve workers in the four-star and three-star headquarters who constantly need to travel to the Pentagon, The Fayetteville Observer reports.

Legislator Passes Away: State Sen. Jim Forrester died Monday at Gaston Memorial Hospital. Forrester, 74, was pronounced dead about noon after suffering complications from cranial bleeding, said his sister-in-law, Sally Beach. Forrester, R-Gaston, had been admitted to the Gastonia facility on Saturday morning, then lost consciousness,

Forrester was born in Scotland and moved to the U.S. as a toddler and remained through World War II. He returned to Scotland and then back to America with his family at age 11, according to his wife of 51 years, Mary Frances. He came to Wilmington and ultimately went to what is now Wake Forest University medical school. Forrester's "life embodied the American Dream," Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, said in a prepared statement, adding he would "remember him most for his dedicated and thoughtful service as he worked to make sure his constituents had the chance to fulfill the American Dream."

Forrester joined the Legislature 20 years ago. This year, he became deputy Senate leader — a largely ceremonial post — as the GOP controlled the chamber for the first time in more than a century. Forrester earned a legislative victory in September when the Legislature approved a statewide constitutional referendum on whether to ban gay marriage in North Carolina. Voters will decide the fate of that referendum in May. Forrester has pushed for the constitutional amendment for several sessions.

On a personal note, the last words NCACTE lobbyist Dave Simpson said to the veteran senator, in a recent legislative session, were offering congratulations on finally accomplishing one of his most passionate goals in the Legislature, involving placing the same-sex issue on a statewide ballot. The senator broke into a grin, nodded his head with a “thank you very much” and walked away.

Quote of the Week:

“Education is about the only thing lying around loose in the world, and it's about the only thing a fellow can have as much of as he's willing to haul away.”

- George Lorimer, American journalist and author

*Editor - Dave Simpson, NCACTE Lobbyist, P. O. Box 30998, Raleigh, N.C. 27622
Phone - (919) 781-3270, #5724; Email - dsimpson@carolinasaqc.org*