



the LEGISLATIVE column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, *Publisher*

THE NORTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES will again have a coalition leadership for the 2005-2006 session.

But something of a one-sided leadership.

With a 63-57 majority, *Democrat Rep. Jim Black* goes into his fourth term as the sole speaker. *Republican Richard Morgan*, a co-Speaker in 2003-2004, stays in a key leadership role as Speaker Pro-Tem with many of the same powers he enjoyed last session. He keeps his office and has authority in appointment of committee chairs.

Of the 120 legislators, 100 voted for the power-sharing arrangement. The 37 Republican representatives who approved did so in face of opposition from their state party chairman. Some Democrats were miffed but all voted to give Morgan power-sharing authority.

In his comments to the full House, *Rep. Morgan* predicted that power-sharing and coalition cooperation will set the tone for the rest of the decade. "It's what the people want," he said.

The historic effort in the last session surprised and pleased observers. Budgets were approved on time and legislative gridlock was avoided. Morgan supporters said the coalition would continue, even if Republicans gain a majority.

THE RALEIGH AGENDA for North Carolina hosiery industry companies will include solidifying funding for the Hosiery Technology Center and support for pro-business legislation. A bill by *Rep. Hugh Holliman* to offer \$400 per employee tax credits to companies that pay at least half the health insurance premiums for personnel is an example.

The hosiery lobbying efforts also will support legislation to help the Center for Applied Textile Technology in its re-organization.

POLITICS IS THE GAME of trade-offs. And

the current session will be dominated by some high-profile fights.

Eliminate the half-cent "temporary" sales tax in exchange for a 75 cents per pack cigarette levy? Adopt a statewide lottery to support education and reduce pressure for tuition and tax increases? Meet rising Medicaid costs with a tax on beer and wine?

It's all on the table.

North Carolina is growing, especially in the Charlotte, Raleigh and Triad areas.

More students mean more schools and that requires more teachers and support personnel.

Hurricanes have depleted the so-called Rainy Day Fund – the state's savings account. More people are being retrained for new jobs. Money, money, money.

THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE went into session the first week of February with a projected \$250 million budget shortfall. But the T word (i.e. taxes) wasn't on the lips of representatives and senators...at least not during the first weeks.

GOP Rep. Ron Johnson of Sylacauga suggested he might introduce a 5 cents per bottle tax on soft drinks and bottled water, say this would raise \$225 million. *Gov. Bob Riley* was playing cards close to his chest during the early weeks, insisting Alabama government could save money by being more efficient.

In the meantime public school teachers were pushing for a 7 percent salary increase, noting the state ranks 49th in teacher pay.

hosiery day

March 29 hosiery day to have new message

Hosiery Day at the N.C. Legislature March 29 will have a broader message.

The emerging partnership between the Hosiery Technology Center and the N.C. Center for Applied Textile Technology will be explained to the representatives and senators at a breakfast meeting and personal visits.

Representatives of the textile center in Belmont NC have been invited to join leaders of the Carolina Hosiery Assn., the Governmental Affairs Council and the Hosiery Technology Center. During the day, exhibits will be set up in the north lobby of the Legislative Building and socks will be distributed to legislators and their staffs.

The hosiery industry has maintained a presence in the State General Assembly for 14 years to promote appropriations for the Hosiery Technology Center. The hosiery and the textile centers both are operating under the State Community Colleges.

The date was changed from the earlier announced date to avoid conflicts with another organization.