



# LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, EDITOR

The 2004 “short session” of the North Carolina General Assembly opens in late May. The halls of the legislative complex hums with 170 legislators, over 400 lobbyists, and legislative staff personnel when senators and representatives are in session.

At least that was the old scene. In this era, on any given weekend, including Fridays, the tempo in the Legislature can be lively. Joint select committees, House select committees, interim committees, and various study commissions bring the officials back to Raleigh on a regular basis. They weigh in on economic development... revenue laws... rising cost of healthcare... motorcycle helmet laws... child abuse... and much, much more.

Add fund-raisers for legislators to the itinerary. Since the beginning of the year, receptions for House members and would-be House members have been a weekly event.

Most senators prefer to raise money with letters and telephone calls.

Although the lawsuit has put a cloud over the 2004 legislative elections, incumbents are charging forward with assumption they will return from districts approved in the 2003 session. And they know lobbyists will be looking for friendly faces when the chambers are conducting business.



Add N.C. Rep. James Crawford of Granville County to the list of legislators who are willing to cross party lines from time to time. Crawford, a Democrat, showed up at a rally for U.S. Rep. Richard Burr who is seeking the U.S. Senate seat vacated by John Edwards. Election reports show he also gave Burr \$1,000 earlier. Republican Burr will face Democrat Erskine Bowles in the general election.

In 1994, Crawford helped elect Harold Brubaker to the Speaker’s office when Republicans gained a narrow majority. He was rewarded by being named co-chair of Appropriations. Crawford has been loyal to House Speaker Jim Black and continues to hold the powerful

Appropriations post under the coalition leadership. Burr’s support for open door free trade could be difficult for voters in Crawford’s district to swallow. Manufacturing layoffs have hit the region hard.



Burr goes into the 2004 U.S. Senate race with the largest bank account in the nation among Senate contenders. The congressman began the year with \$5 million in his campaign account. Of that total, \$1.1 million came from political action committees, including those from organizations pushing an open doors trade agenda.

Meanwhile, Erskine Bowles, Burr’s likely opponent, has been hammering away at the Bush administration, criticizing its enforcement of trade agreements.

“We need somebody to stand up and say we are not going to lose any more of these jobs to countries that do not respect the trade agreements we’ve already got on the books,” Bowles is saying at rallies across North Carolina.

Bowles blames China for trade violations and much of the job losses that have hit North Carolina. He said the Asian country has closed off its markets to U.S. goods, adopted unfavorable monetary policies and illegally shipped clothing into the United States through Mexico and other countries

“We are China’s biggest customer,” Bowles asserts. “We’ve got to start using some of our market muscle.”



North Carolina’s state universities -- the names N.C. State and UNC-Chapel Hill -- attracted some \$560 million in federal and private research dollars in 2002. A portion of that money is earmarked for overhead, including rent on buildings funded by the General Assembly.

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A consultant recently noted that the research dollars actually generated \$930 million in spending, roughly equivalent to the value of the state's apparel and textiles industry.

Say what?

The top 10 hosiery manufacturers in North Carolina generate close to \$900 million in shipments. All total, N.C. hosiery companies ship goods each year valued at over \$3 billion.

The consultant needs to revisit his research.

The legislative committee hearing the consultant's report was impressed. "This may be the best return on investment we've seen yet," said Sen. Joe Sam Queen of Haywood County.