



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, Editor

U.S. Rep. T. Cass Ballenger, North Carolina 10th District Republican, announced in December he will not seek reelection. Ballenger has represented the district since 1986. He is a former representative and senator in the N.C. General Assembly and also served on the Catawba Board of County Commissioners.

Ballenger's critical vote to give President Bush "fast track" trade negotiation authority angered voters who are seeing their jobs shipped overseas. The 10th District reportedly has the highest percentage of blue collar workers in the nation.

Ballenger is the founder and an owner of Plastic Packaging Inc. which has been a supplier to the hosiery industry and an exhibitor in past expositions.

George Moretz of Hickory, chairman of Carolina Mills, a hosiery supplier firm, has announced he will seek Ballenger's seat. Moretz also is a Republican who has criticized Ballenger and members of Congress for not protecting manufacturing jobs.

will be deeper in a presidential election year. The state budget again will have a hole of at least \$500 million. And somewhere, revenue (mainly from taxes and fees) and cuts in spending will have to meet.

The Hosiery Technology Center, already facing possible cuts in federal Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) funds, is looking at the demand for more services in market development. With the quota-free marketplace in 2005, the HTC believes the industry will need more support from the HTC resources to pursue innovative strategies.

In an election year, lawmakers tend to make no waves, especially if the incumbent president appears to have long coattails.

continued on page 6



The hosiery industry will lose two staunch friends in the North Carolina General Assembly at the end of 2004. Maybe more.

Rep. Gordon Allen of Person County and Rep. Stan Fox of Vance County have announced their retirement. Allen, cochairman of the House Finance Committee, helped shepherd the legislation that authorized the Hosiery Technology Center to retain fees for testing services. Fox, cochair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Economic and Natural Resources, always supported the HTC appropriation from the Workers Training Trust Fund.

Both have been loyal allies of House Speaker Jim Black and have supported the agenda of House Speaker Richard Morgan. They are moderate Democrats and both come with business backgrounds. They meet payrolls.

Allen also served three terms in the N.C. Senate where he rose to the leadership ranks under Lt. Gov. Jim Hunt and later Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan.

Before registration for the 2004 elections February 2, more retirements may be announced. Redistricting, that placed several incumbents in paired districts, will eliminate others.



The legislative agenda for the Carolina hosiery industry in 2004 will be tied to a "do no harm" message. Partisan divisions



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LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

continued from page 5

Look for economic incentives to be on the North Carolina legislative agenda in 2004. Secretary of Commerce Jim Fain, speaking at a recent NCCBI board of directors meeting, insisted recruiting of new businesses to the state will require more cash on the table. The legislature controls the cash.

Boeing reportedly has put the TransPark facilities in Kinston on its list for possible building of a new cargo plane. The price tag? Up to \$300 million.

Alabama invested \$200 million to land the Mercedes plant which has turned out to be a good investment, according to observers.

Fain also field questions and comments from NCCBI board members who were critical of the efforts put forth by Gov. Mike Easley. Fain is an Easley appointee.

Critics of the state program believe that Commerce should be investing in existing companies as they make the transition into a global environment.