



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, Editor

The recent filing period for office seekers opened without the name of a high-profile North Carolina state senator. Steve Metcalf of Buncombe County, who came to the Senate in 1999 and quickly moved into the inner circle of leaders, announced prior to the filing period he was stepping down. His resignation was effective Feb. 2.

Sen. Metcalf, whose father worked in a textile company, is a moderate Democrat and a fiscal conservative. He is an advocate for environmental clean-up and safety but he also is a pay-as-you-go proponent. He was a sponsor of the Clean Air legislation that would have imposed a 7 percent electrical bill surcharge to pay for abatement equipment at the state's coal-burning power plants. The CHA joined other industrial and agricultural organizations to fight the bill which eventually was passed without the surcharge on businesses.

A former county manager, Metcalf is pro-business and probably will be among the lobbyists walking the halls of the General Assembly. When he accepted the position of vice president of governmental relations at Western Carolina University, the outcry was so loud he was forced to resign. Later he was criticized for comments expressing an interest in lobbying for Blue Cross Blue Shield.



On the Republican side of the N.C. Senate, new faces will replace veterans. Senate Minority Leader Patrick Ballentine will leave the Senate to campaign for governor. Virginia Foxx is in a crowded field seeking the 5th congressional seat being vacated by Richard Burr, GOP candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Sen. Tony Moore of Pitt will be among the new GOP senators if voters don't punish him for his party switch last fall. He had a recent fund-raiser in Pitt County which brought top Republicans, including U.S. Congressman Walter Jones Jr., also a former Democrat.



Voters in North Central North Carolina – including the hosiery area of Mt. Airy – will see a father-son ticket this year.

James Harrell III of Mount Airy was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in 2002. This year, his father, James Harrell Jr., will seek the Democratic nomination for the 5th Congressional District seat held by Richard Burr who has his sights on the U.S. Senate seat held by John Edwards.

Harrell Jr. has been a member of the Surry County Board of Commissioners.



While some Alabama taxpayers struggle to hang on to their jobs, state employees, including teachers are fighting to hang on to benefits that by some estimates exceed 50 percent of their pay.

Vacation pay, some 14 paid holidays, and sick leave give Alabama public employees almost 30 days of time away from their jobs. The state is struggling with budget holes that exceed \$500 million. Powerful lobbying organization for employees and teachers have kept legislators from tackling the issue. A major source of state revenue is property tax paid by manufacturers and businesses facing global economic threats.

A they-just-don't-get-it award is appropriate for some state officials and lobbyists.



The "coalition government" that worked so well in the N.C. House of Representatives in 2003 probably will continue in 2004. And maybe beyond.

Republican Co-Speaker Richard Morgan, speaking at a fund-raiser for his friend and associate Rep. Harold Brubaker recently, said he has heard people in North Carolina say they want bipartisan government that works. "It's a new day in North Carolina politics," Morgan told the crowd of lobbyists and supporters. All signs would suggest Morgan is correct.

Democrat Co-Speaker Jim Black liked the relationship. Unless either party gets a six or eight-votes margin, the coalition will hold. Rep. Martin Nesbit of Buncombe County, one of the Democratic independents, will move to the Senate to replace Steve Metcalf. Martin often joined a minority of black representatives that opposed Speaker Black.

HOSEPAC Promotes Candidates' Support

The Hosiery Political Action Committee, coordinated by former CHA executive director Paul Fogleman, has appealed for contributions to help re-elect supporters in the North Carolina General Assembly and to encourage the state's congressional delegation to help with a national industry agenda.

Fogleman represents the CHA as a lobbyist in the state legislature and works with the Hosiery Governmental Affairs Committee headed by Darrell Frye, vice president of Harriss & Covington Hosiery Co., High Point.

"Several of our longtime allies in the General Assembly are retiring or seeking other offices," Fogleman said. "Our returning friends will be especially important as we cultivate a relationship with new faces," he added.

Fogleman noted that the national agenda not only includes trade agreements and measures to establish "fair trade", but also to protect the future of the Hosiery Technology Center. The budget of President Bush slashed appropriations to the Manufacturing Extension Partnerships across the U.S. by 60 percent. The HTC could lose its annual appropriation of \$351,000.

"We have a major task to protect our domestic markets and also our most valuable resource: the technology center," Fogleman continued.

All money received by HOSEPAC goes to candidates and to mailing costs, it was explained.