



LEGISLATIVE COLUMN

By PAUL FOGLEMAN, PUBLISHER

North Carolina has been declared a presidential race battleground state by Democrats and Republicans. Money will flow to media--especially television stations--as never before.

The governor's race also may be closer than expected. The State Employees Association, angry at the tight-fisted policies of Mike Easley, has endorsed GOP candidate Patrick Ballentine who has promised larger pay raises. Ballentine is the first Republican gubernatorial candidate ever endorsed by the state employees and it will be a major boost to his campaign.

It follows, then, that key legislative races will be close although most of the shakeouts occurred in the primary. The 2003-04 General Assembly saw the House split 60-60 along party lines, with unique co-speaker leadership. In the Senate, Democrats had a four-member lead.

Should one party capture a one to four member majority in the House, does this mean the end to the co-speaker arrangement? Maybe not. Factions within both parties would make governing difficult--in not impossible--without a margin of at least 10, some veteran observers conclude.

Prediction: The co-speaker arrangement will be in place again for 2005-06.

Rep. Wayne Goodwin left his House seat this year. But the Goodwin family will continue to serve the people of the 68th District. His wife, Melanie, won the Democratic primary and has no opposition this fall.

In the meantime, Wayne is knocking on doors across the state in his bid to become Commissioner of Labor. Reports indicate he is making inroads and could pose a serious challenge to incumbent Cherie Berry, the first Republican to win a Council seat in over a century. Ms. Berry served with Goodwin in the House.

Goodwin says he is trying to define the role for the labor commissioner because people don't understand the authority. He is working at developing a job description that fits his vision for the office.

The late GOP national convention that went into September gave President Bush a few bumps upward in the polls. But the convention rhetoric did not help Rep. Richard Burr who is running against Erskine Bowles for the U.S. Senate.

Bowles continues to hold a large lead, largely due to his credibility with the business community. Bowles has been consistent with his stand on fair trade and his opposition to *carte blanche* agreements that include high tariffs on goods flowing out of the United States.

When speakers at the GOP national convention frequently referred to Biblical phrases and to God, it was not serendipitous. Indeed it was

a reminder to the fundamentalist Christian core that they were not forgotten, even though their leaders were not on the platform.

In his book, "The Bush Family Dynasty," columnist Kevin Phillips, a longtime Republican, outlines the consistent courting of the Christian vote with code words in speeches. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole talked of President Bush's "peace that passes all understanding." California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger mentioned God frequently.

Soon Democrats probably will be following the same path. And founders of the United States of America, who insisted on separation of church and state, must be spinning.

Dennis Hastert, U.S. Speaker of the House, recently came to North Carolina's 13th District to campaign for Virginia Johnson who is opposing incumbent Democrat Brad Miller. Rep. Hastert at a \$1,000 a plate dinner talked about how Miller had drawn the district to enhance his election while he was on the redistricting committee in the N.C. Senate. Hastert frequently used the "liberal" word.

Where was Miller while the dinner was going on? He was leading canned goods on a truck for a food bank.

U.S. Rep. Miller is a one-term incumbent who is supporting the hosiery industry's petition for a call on imports from China.

Rep. Hastert also predicted that Congress will pass a tobacco quota buyout bill before November to help Rep. Richard Burr in his bid to defeat Erskine Bowles.

N.C. Senator Virginia Foxx is looking forward to serving as the 5th District's congressional representative, predicting she easily will defeat Jim Harrell Jr., the Democratic nominee. President Bush carried the district in 2000 by 35 percentage points.

At the same time, Sen. Foxx refers to her defeat of "a vitriolic conservative activist" and the bitter tone of the campaign may give Harrell the opportunity to woo Republicans who were turned off by the tone of the primary.

Sen. Foxx said she wants to serve on the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee which drafts legislation on health care issues. She said she will introduce "do not call" legislation to prohibit robo-political calls.

Governmental Affairs

The Governmental Affairs Council for the CHA will meet at 10 a.m. Thursday, October 7, at Harriss & Covington Mills, Inc. in High Point. The agenda will include the hosiery industry interests in the Nov. 2 elections and strategies for communicating priors to mills and their personnel.