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**Subject:** News from Common Cause North Carolina

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## Common Cause North Carolina

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### Cooling Off- Lobbying & Ethics

Letter to the Editor

Abbreviated version published in the *News & Observer* 6/3/08

Earlier this week, Boyce Hudson, a former official with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pled guilty to charges of extortion. Part of what Hudson received in payment as part of that extortion was a lucrative two year consulting contract with the company that was the target of his extortion and which benefited from his actions while he was at DENR. Hudson's behavior is extreme but it does help highlight two key problems in North Carolina government.

Our state employees, most of whom work very hard to provide us with essential services, keep the state functioning and keep us safe, frequently earn far less in their jobs than they could working in the private sector. Too often, people come and learn their crafts while working for the state and then move on to private companies.

Unfortunately, even with the ethics reforms done in the last three years, there is still an open revolving door which allows someone to work for the state of North Carolina on Friday and on Monday morning be at work for a private company lobbying the people with whom they used to work. Our legislators and state agency heads have to wait at least six months after they leave

public service before they can lobby their former colleagues. US Senators have to wait two years before they can do the same.

There needs to be a cooling off period for top level state employees before they can go to work for the businesses they have been regulating, supervising and granting contracts to. In 2005, Senator Rand included a cooling off period of in Senate Bill 612, the first of the major reform bills. It is time to enact that legislation and not wait for another example of misdeeds to pop to the surface.

Jane B. Pinsky  
Director  
NC Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform



### **More Coalition for Lobbying & Government Reform updates:**

The Coalition has been busy in the last month. The short session of the General Assembly opened on May 13th. Since the session began the coalition is working on tightening and perfecting our ethics laws. Some of the issues for which we have been advocating include:

- \* prohibiting lawmakers from asking lobbyists for contributions to charities
- getting campaigns to identify their big campaign fundraisers
- \* keeping lobbyists completely out of fundraising for people they are trying to influence
- \* increasing staffing for the State Ethics Commission, the Board of Elections and the Lobbying Compliance Division of the Secretary of State's office

## **What's Happenin' at the Legislature- the budget**

Every even year, lawmakers return to Raleigh in May to make adjustments to the state budget. Only money bills and legislation that at least one chamber approved in the previous year are to be eligible for consideration. Yet, longtime Raleigh observers know that the so called "short session" often drags well into summer and beyond.

This year may be different. [The state House this week approved a \\$21.3 billion budget which now moves to the state Senate for consideration.](#) A mid July adjournment may still be in sight, yet there are no guarantees when it comes to the Legislature finishing its business.

[Certainly the House budget proposal doesn't provide consensus.](#) Teachers and state employees are upset over the proposed pay raises offered. There will be pressure on the state Senate to provide more, which certainly could take a while to iron out.

## **Campaign Finance Reform- Council of State Chapel Hill, and the US Congress**

Meanwhile, at least one important allocation the state House has provided is more than \$3 million to fully fund the Council of State public financing pilot program. Four of the six nominees for State Auditor, State School Superintendent and State Insurance Commissioner qualified for

the public financing program.

What a great thing, from now until November 4th election day, these statewide candidates do not have to raise one penny of campaign money.

### **MORE PUBLIC FINANCING NEWS**

**[Chapel Hill town council continues to move forward with its plans for public financing for local elections.](#)** Common Cause Assistant Director Diane Tworog spoke favorably for the reform at a public hearing in Chapel Hill last month. The town council is to vote on the proposal on June 9th.

And the push for public financing for Congress received a boost from an unlikely pair. Former U.S. Congressman Jim Gardner and Tim Valentine teamed up for [a guest op-ed in favor of the proposal.](#)

## **A Couple of Bills We're Watching**

**National Popular Vote** - the movement to have the office of President elected by the national popular vote rather than the electoral college. The bill passed the state Senate last year and is expected to be considered by the House this session. [Click for a recent article in the Winston Salem Journal.](#)

**Ending the tuition break for out of state scholarship athletes (HB 205)**- The bill would stop the practice of universities giving in-state tuition rates for out of state athletes on scholarship, which is costing the public up to \$8 million a year. The tuition break was pushed through the General Assembly by the powerful political action committee- Citizens for Higher Education- which was created for the benefit of UNC-Chapel Hill. [The Citizens for Higher Education's close ties with the state Senate leadership](#) pretty much guarantees HB 205 won't get a hearing this summer.

## **Campus Outreach Summer Plans**

Even though school is out for summer vacation(!), Common Cause NC is still working to energize students and encourage them to get involved in their democracy. On Monday, June 16, 2008 in Raleigh, the Campus Outreach Project will host a HBCU Conference entitled, "Young People Get Involved, It's Your Democracy!"

Representative Ty Harrell of Wake County will be the speaker for this event. Students from our partnering universities, North Carolina Central, North Carolina A&T and Fayetteville State will be attending this event to begin to craft ideas for the exciting civic engagement work that the Campus Outreach Project will conduct in the fall as the 2008 General Election draws closer.

For the Fall Semester, the Campus Outreach Project will engage students in a series of motivating civic engagement activities. These activities include:

- Conducting civic engagement workshops on each campus which specifically focus on campus organizing and approaching political issues in a nonpartisan form,

- Hosting a forum on each campus entitled "I want to be a Public Servant" which will highlight the importance of public service and what it takes to enter the "world" of public service
- Voter education related events, voter registration activities and rallies at our partnering campuses.



(Above: NCCU students participate in "Step to the Polls," a rally and march to vote at a one-stop voting site)

## **Let's Talk about Voter-Owned Elections: An Interactive Training Greensboro- June 11th**

Learn how to explain voter-owned elections to friends, elected officials, and community groups. Discover how to relate it to other issues such as development or the environment. Know how to counter common arguments against it. This session will be helpful to people with all levels of background on public financing from "I think I read about that once" to "I'm an expert on the topic." Emphasis will be on role playing exercises.

Training will be facilitated by Common Cause NC and Democracy NC. Join us Wed., June 11th from 5:30-7:00 at the Glenwood Library (1901 W. Florida St). The training is free. For more info or to RSVP, contact Diane at [dtworog@commoncause.org](mailto:dtworog@commoncause.org) or (919) 836-0027. Bring your friends!

*Interested, but don't live near Greensboro? Contact Diane Tworog at [dtworog@commoncause.org](mailto:dtworog@commoncause.org) and we can discuss arranging more trainings.*

## **CCNC Summer Interns**

This summer, we're fortunate to have two great interns, Emily and Kelsey. They're helping us with everything from entering data to research to lobbying at the legislature.

**Emily DeCamillis:** Emily is a rising junior at American University in Washington, DC. She has an interdisciplinary major, combining communications, law, economics, and government. She's previously volunteered for a congressional and an NC house campaign.

**Kelsey Ice:** Kelsey, a public policy major, is a rising senior at UNC-CH. She's previously interned at the Institute for a Secure and Sustainable Environment. Kelsey grew up outside of

Knoxville, TN.

## Thanks to our Supporters!

As many of you know, we're currently in our annual spring fundraising drive. Thanks to all (listed below) who have responded to our appeal. And remember new contributors, every dollar we receive is matched by one of our larger funders. Thanks again!

*Elizabeth Axtell, Virginia Adkins, Bill Hasse, Cyrus & Carolyn King, Karsten & Carol Rist, George A. George, James George, Janet Palmquist, Raymond & Ann Mack, Frank Sargent, John Sylvester, Jr., Quentin &, Marjorie Lindsey, Wade Goss, Mr. & Mrs. Field, Greg Olley, Harriet Harper, Bill Jirles, Janet Allen, Edward Glazener, Phillips Cutright, Cleve Mathews, Gene Braswell, Patricia Griffin, James Alderman, Elsie Eads, John Fica, J. Glen Dulken, Derusha Phillips, Creighton Brown, Kathlyn Heuts, Dominic Acque, Thomas & Marian Jerdee, Carolyn Van Sant, Bill Palich, Stephen McCutchan, Dennis Murphy, Allen Wellons, Eva Harrington & Ralph Balzac, John Blackburn, Gary Boorman, Joyce & Shayne Gad, Sarah Dillon, Christopher Roy, Margot Cain, Homer Price, Jr., Dr. James Rogers, Dr. Dan Gerber, Barclay Martin, Frank & Virginia French, Dr. Terry Wall, Dr. Rus McCarter, Denise Finck Rothman, George & Eva Norsworthy, Margaret & Geoffrey Wainwright, Ramsay Lawson, Della Ewart, Patrick Sullivan, Dr. James Bowman, William Whalen, Pearl Berlin, Patrick Buffkin, Raymond Philipps, Hardee Klitzman*

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