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## Common Cause North Carolina

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### NC Judicial Public Financing Ruled Constitutional by Federal Court

Great news this past week for voter-owned elections in North Carolina. A challenge of our state's judicial public financing program was rejected by the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals. The court ruling means that the program giving North Carolina statewide judicial candidates an alternative from having to raise campaign money from special interests is constitutional.

Since 2004, 9 of 11 winning candidates for NC Court of Appeals and State Supreme Court have run as public financing candidates. 14 of 16 candidates running for the 2008 NC statewide judicial races have opted into the program. The voter-owned elections system has dramatically reduced the amount of money statewide judicial candidates have taken from the legal community and other special interests.

The court's ruling is a clear victory for all citizens who want more voter-owned election options for candidates. A reminder, this year, candidates for State Auditor, State Insurance Commissioner and State School Superintendent are able to take advantage of public financing providing they receive small dollar donations from 750 NC citizens. We urge you to support the candidate of your choice with a small dollar donation.

### Voter engagement at HBCU's

Many young people across North Carolina are voting for the first time in 2008. Common Cause

North Carolina HBCU coordinator Stevie Lawrence has been busy talking with students at North Carolina Central, Fayetteville State University, and North Carolina A&T discussing the importance of their participation in democracy this year and beyond.

CCNC is currently surveying students to identify what issues are most important to them. Racial justice, livable wages, affordable tuition, election reform and climate change are some of the many areas young people are listing as their top concerns.

CCNC will be once again, hosting a lobby day next year, bringing HBCU students to Raleigh to meet their state legislators and discuss with them face-to-face the issues on their minds. The [2005 HBCU lobby day](#), sponsored by CCNC attracted students from four campuses.

"We believe young people can have a powerful voice in democracy if they understand how to use it," says Common Cause HBCU coordinator Stevie Lawrence. "Our challenge is to keep young people engaged and interested in participating in democracy well beyond the elections of 2008."



Left: NCCU students fill out issue surveys. Right: Stevie and Marcia Louise Dyson- wife of author and commentator Michael Eric Dyson have a nonpartisan conversation on FSU's campus.

## North Carolina Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform Survey Updates

The NC Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform has had a busy few months. As we noted in our last e-newsletter, we have surveyed the 370 candidates for statewide and legislative office on five key ethics issues:

- lobbyists involvement in fundraising
- disclosure of bundling
- limits on the dollar amount political parties can give to candidates
- prohibiting legislators and members of the council of state from soliciting money for not-for profit organizations from lobbyists
- restricting lobbyists involvement with the PAC's of the organizations for whom they lobby

We had great success. All eight of the candidates for governor, six of the lieutenant governor candidates, and a growing number of Council of State and legislative candidates have responded. You can see the latest at [www.nclobbyreform.org](http://www.nclobbyreform.org). We are encouraging voters to look at the responses as they make their decisions on for whom they will vote on May 6<sup>th</sup> and in

November.

We are getting ready for the legislative session on May 13<sup>th</sup> where we hope to continue the success the Coalition has made in the last three years.

Again, visit [www.nclobbyreform.org](http://www.nclobbyreform.org) for survey responses and links to media coverage. Thanks to our interns Matt Clark, Morgan Wright, Morgan Donnelley, and Jessica Case for their hard work on this project.

## JIM HIGHTOWER brings message of hope to NC

Author, commentator and agitator Jim Hightower delighted audiences in Asheville and Chapel Hill mixing his unique brand of humor with a message of hope for the future. Appearing on behalf of Common Cause North Carolina, Hightower touted his latest book, "[Swim Against the Current- even a dead fish can go with the flow.](#)" The book is a collection of stories from across the country of as Hightower describes it, "ordinary people doing extraordinary things" to make changes for the better to their communities.



The book references North Carolina's own experience in moving public financing forward for statewide judicial candidates. Hightower urged people not to underestimate what they can do as individuals to bring about positive change.

The Asheville event drew about 100 people while more than 175 people attended Hightower's speech in Chapel Hill. Hightower happily autographed dozens of books

following his remarks.

During his two day visit to North Carolina, Hightower met with Asheville local elected officials and citizen activists to discuss the merits of local public financing of elections. A recent CCNC study has found a dramatic increase in the costs of running for city council and mayor. He also met with editorial writers with the Asheville Citizen Times and the [Raleigh News and Observer](#). [The Independent](#) of the Triangle, also conducted an interview that was published the week of his visit.

Chris Fitzsimon, a member of the CCNC governing board and executive director of NC Policy Watch interviewed Hightower for a program on Capital Broadcasting's network of radio stations.



"Swim Against the Current" is available at most independent book stores. If you have trouble finding it, please contact us.

## Common Cause State Governing Board Meeting

Saturday, May 17th

Common Cause North Carolina invites all of our members to join us on Saturday, May 17th for

our next State Governing Board (SGB) meeting. The SGB is made up of Common Cause members from throughout the state who meet every other month. They help orchestrate events, fundraisers, and our annual banquet as well as provide input on programs and policies.

All Common Cause members are invited to our Saturday, May 17th meeting. It will be at the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church on Hillsborough St. in Raleigh from 10-2 (bring your own lunch).

This is a great opportunity to meet the Common Cause staff, the SGB members, and learn more about the day to day activities of Common Cause North Carolina. And of course, we're always interested in adding new members to our SGB.

Not a Common Cause member? Not a problem. You can easily join online or at the May 17th meeting.

If you'd like to join us on the 17th, please email Diane at [dtworog@commoncause.org](mailto:dtworog@commoncause.org) Thanks!

## Remember to Vote!

Tuesday, May 6th

If you haven't early voted, don't forget to go to the polls this Tuesday. Remind your friends, relatives, and coworkers. There's more than just presidential contests on the ballot. To see your sample ballot, [click here](#).

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