

State and National

Election year may stimulate legislative session

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — North Carolina legislators have a powerful incentive to make this summer's session of the General Assembly a smooth one: the 1988 election.

"Every day you stay here, there's a potential for controversial issues to emerge and cause some of our leaders to have to take stands that they'd just as soon not," said Rep. Ed Nye, D-Bladen.

Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor, and Rep. Bob Etheridge, D-Harnett, the nominee for superintendent of public instruction, would benefit from a quiet and quick session, Nye said. So would Democratic legislators who are up for reelection.

The General Assembly's leadership routinely promises a smooth and businesslike session with adjournment in early July. And the promise is typically broken. But some lawmakers believe the session that convenes June 2 may be different.

Democrats, who control the Legislature, would like to enact some

News Analysis

popular measures and get out of town without a repetition of last year's House-Senate feuding that embarrassed Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan, now the party's gubernatorial nominee.

"I see for the first time since I've been here that we're really on the fast track," said Nye, co-chairman of a key budget subcommittee. He has been in the Legislature since 1975, except for the 1983-84 session.

There were hopeful signs last week during three days of hearings on Gov. Jim Martin's proposed \$558 million supplement to the 1988-89 budget, which will be the chief item of business next month.

The Joint Appropriations Committee whisked through Martin's blueprint as presented by a parade of cabinet secretaries and other department heads, asking numerous questions but raising few controversial points that could prolong the session.

At one point, co-chairman Rep. Billy Watkins, D-Granville, angered

some Republicans by brusquely refusing to let Commerce Secretary Claude Pope recite statistics about North Carolina's good economic performance in 1987.

Watkins insisted he wasn't trying to be offensive but wanted to keep the focus on next year's budget.

"Really, we're trying to keep it businesslike," he said. Asked whether a smooth session would benefit Jordan, with whom Watkins often clashed last year, he laughed and said, "I think a quick, easy session . . . will help every living, breathing soul."

The budget, more than any other factor, determines a session's timetable. Lawmakers cannot go home until the budget is finished. Once it is, there's a mad rush toward adjournment.

The biggest reason for the length of last year's session was the plodding pace of the budget process, which became mired in a House-Senate fight. Jordan, sensitive to media criticism of the secretive process, tried to open meetings of the "supersub" — the elite group of leaders who assemble the spending package.

House leaders resisted his reforms, creating a weeks-long stalemate.

If predictions of adjournment by July 4 come true, it likely will be because Jordan, House Speaker Liston Ramsey and other key officials cut a deal on how the budget will be put together. Lawmakers said last week nothing had been decided.

They did say the Appropriations Committee would not divide into five subcommittees to study Martin's plan as it usually does — a decision that should enhance brevity.

A possible money shortage could create a snag. Some Democrats accuse Martin of packing \$100 million more into his budget than revenue projections justify, a charge he denies.

If there's only enough to give state employees and teachers a 4.5 percent raise and fund a few capital projects, as Watkins says might be the case, the scramble will intensify.

"It takes more time to say no to programs than to fund them," said Rep. Martin Nesbitt, D-Buncombe, co-chairman of the budget subcommittee on education.

Still another indication that lawmakers mean business is that fewer bills will be introduced than during the last short session in 1986, when numerous study committees were permitted to study proposals.

This year, only two study panels will report — and deadlines for introducing other measures have been set.

Martin criticized a committee studying possible consolidation of state environmental agencies last month when it decided to recommend delaying action on his plan until 1989. He inserted the plan into his budget package to force a vote, but its defeat seems certain.

Martin also says he'll demand a vote on a constitutional amendment to give the governor veto power, despite repeated rebuffs in the past. Jim Gardner, the GOP nominee for lieutenant governor, says he'll lead a pro-veto march to the Legislative Building.

Democrats are unfazed. "We'll deal with that in such a quick manner," Nye said. "We'll take it up on the floor and zip! It's gone."

Pre-trial publicity results in motion to change court site

From Associated Press reports

LUMBERTON — Attorneys for the man accused of killing judicial candidate Julian Pierce have asked for a change of venue because of pre-trial publicity.

"Any prosecutor of this case in Robeson or any adjacent county (would be) highly controversial in light of the rumors and feelings regarding racial or political motives for the murder," wrote Evander Britt III and Donald Bullard, attorneys for Sandy Jordan Chavis.

The motion was filed Friday in Robeson County Superior Court. Chavis was arraigned Monday and is scheduled to go to trial July 5,

according to The News and Observer of Raleigh.

Chavis, 24, is charged with first-degree murder in the March 26 shooting death of Pierce, a Lumbee Indian who was running against white District Attorney Joe Freeman Britt for a special Superior Court judgeship. Investigators initially said the killing appeared to be a political assassination, but several days later said it was the result of a personal dispute.

Joe Britt, who is not related to Evander Britt, was declared the winner automatically after Pierce was killed.

Robeson County Sheriff Hubert Stone described Chavis as a friend of John Anderson Goins, who authorities said dated the daughter of Pierce's girlfriend. According to Stone, Goins was angry with Pierce for his role in breaking up their

relationship. Goins committed suicide shortly before authorities were to arrest him, Stone said.

Evander Britt and Bullard, in a separate motion filed Monday, also asked the court for \$1,000 to conduct opinion polls of Robeson area resi-

idents to prove that Chavis could not receive a fair trial.

Joe Britt has asked the state to prosecute the case. Special Deputy Attorney General James Coman, who is handling the case, could not be reached for comment.

Strode family puts church in public eye

From Associated Press reports

MARION — The Rev. Danny Castle says his congregation at New Manna Baptist Church has been hurt by the controversy surrounding the street-preaching Strode family who attend the church.

"We don't hate these people," Castle said. "We are not encouraging these people. In fact, we are trying to discourage them."

David and Robin Strode's three children — Duffy, Pepper and Matthew — have been suspended four

times from Eastfield Elementary School for violating school rules when Duffy and Matthew preached on school grounds.

The rules require the students to obey teachers and administrators when on campus and come inside the school building after 7:30 a.m.

"I believe it's a trick of the devil to discredit our ministry," Castle said.

Castle said as many as 75 percent of his church members have experienced harassment at work because the Strodes attend New Manna.

"They've been called names and they are being made fun of," Castle said.

He said he differs with Strode on the issue of obeying authority.

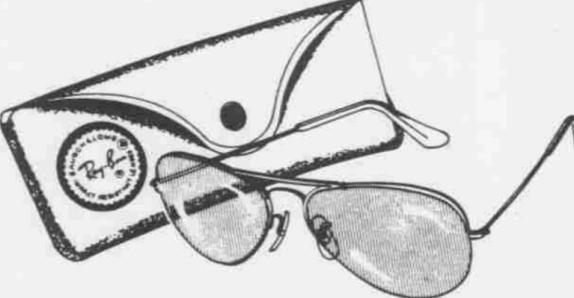
"We're law-abiding — God-fearing, but law-abiding," Castle said. "We are to obey the law of man until it conflicts with the law of God, but this case is not like that."

He said there was pressure in his congregation to get the Strodes to leave the church, but he was resisting, although he sees some damage to the youth ministry.

"Our bus drivers say they get questions at every house about this situation," Castle said. He said the bus ministry is a cornerstone of the 1,500-member congregation.

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