

Election '88

Experts' opinions differ on effect of political polling

By JOHN BAKHT
Staff Writer

Although recently interviewed political analysts agreed that political polling is increasingly important, they were unable to agree on the degree of influence polls have had on 1988 campaigns.

Polls that show one candidate with a large lead late in the race may cause a significant number of people to vote for the leader, said Frank Biocca, a journalism professor who has been conducting polls for USA Today.

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you're supposed to have in a democracy."

But George Gallup Jr., president of the major polling group the Gallup Organization, disagreed. "The evidence, just by looking at poll results, indicates that (leading) candidates don't pick up any strength toward the end."

In fact, the trailing candidate usually takes a gain in the polls, he said in a telephone interview. For example, Michael Dukakis' ratings went up in the last stretch of the race.

That may be due to the complacency the leading campaign some-

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times adopts, said Phillip Meyer, UNC journalism professor.

Gallup, and others who call the bandwagon effect a myth, point to the election of 1948 in which polls

predicted a landslide in favor of Republican candidate Thomas Dewey. President Harry Truman was re-elected in a surprising upset.

But the 1948 election doesn't refute

the bandwagon theory, Biocca said. "Those surveys (in 1948) were in some isolated magazines and a few elite newspapers, and that was before television."

All experts agree that polls mean big political business. A candidate's standing in polls often determines who will contribute and how much. "Contributors don't want to back a loser," Meyer said.

In the primaries, polls influence how people vote to a much greater degree. Supporters of a primary candidate who is far behind in the polls may vote for the front-runner

to prevent any other candidates they dislike from winning. For example, Republican supporters of Jack Kemp might have voted for George Bush in primaries to prevent Bob Dole from winning.

The polls that aren't simply head-to-head measures of who's winning have more social value, most analysts say. "Through survey research we tell candidates how the public reacts to what they say," said Tom Riehle, an analyst for Peter Hart Research.

"Polls enhance the process tremendously," Gallup said. "They get the voters to the leaders."

Superintendent race little known

By DENISE JOYCE
Staff Writer

Although education has become a major issue in this election, candidates for N.C. superintendent of public instruction, Democrat Bob Etheridge and Republican Tom Rodgers, have received little attention in their bids for office.

The superintendent directly influences the state public school educational policies and directs the future of the system.

Decreasing the public school dropout rate and improving student achievement are at the top of Etheridge's agenda, he said in a telephone

interview Monday.

"Those two issues go hand in hand," Etheridge said. By improving those areas, North Carolina could become more competitive, productive and professional in the future, he said.

Republican candidate Tom Rodgers was not available for comment, but an official publication of North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry discussed issues of his campaign.

According to the publication, Rodgers endorses a strong emphasis in vocational education and optional schools, use of standardized tests to

identify potential dropouts and an age-appropriate AIDS curriculum.

Also, Rodgers wants to set a timetable for teacher salaries to reach the national average and install incentives for critical areas of teaching.

Etheridge said he wanted to build stronger partnerships with the business community and parents.

"All of us are going to have to work together because our schools are the key for success," Etheridge said.

Etheridge is interested in dealing with parents' lack of involvement in their children's education and international competition for brainpower.

Although Etheridge has fewer campaign funds and is considered the underdog, he said he was pleased with his campaign this year.

"We've got low funds but we do have a message. We're ready to roll up our sleeves and go to work," he said.

Most North Carolinians usually vote according to their party on education issues, Etheridge said.

"We offer alternatives," he said. "I don't mind saying that I think the Republicans have an awful education program this year, and historically, their record is bad."

Candidates woo influential swing vote

By SUSAN HOLDSCLAW
Staff Writer

With modern voters no longer making their political choices along party lines, political parties must work harder than ever to capture the all-important swing vote.

Merle Black, UNC associate professor of political science, said that because there are no majority parties any more, neither Democrats nor Republicans can win the election without appealing to independents or voters who have registered with the other party.

About 45 percent of Americans vote straight Republican, while about 46 percent vote straight Democrat, according to Dudley Gwaltney, finance director for the N.C. Republican Party. "Both parties are going after the 10 percent of people who do swing," he said.

With registered N.C. Democrats

outnumbering Republicans, Gwaltney said the swing vote was a fortunate thing. "We're thankful they don't vote straight party or else we'd never win anything."

Rick Roldan of the Republican National Committee agreed. "In the state of North Carolina, they (swing voters) determine almost every election."

Although statistics indicate the number of people identifying themselves as independents in political elections has increased, Roldan said, the political parties have not weakened. Swing voters tend to make a party stronger because they present a greater challenge to make the parties reach out to get that vote, he added.

Gwaltney said the Republicans looked at previous elections to identify whom they should target for

mailings, candidate visitation and advertising.

In addition, they try to focus on voter education. Because many state Republicans have just moved to the area and tend to be younger than the Democrats, they tend not to vote for the General Assembly races, Gwaltney said. In response, the party tries to educate North Carolinians on state Senate and House matters.

Meanwhile, Gwaltney said, "Democrats tend to do a better job of voting from the White House to the courthouse."

He attributed the Republicans' lack of participation to the fact that until recently, Republicans never had candidates for the state legislature. But with more Republicans running for office and Republicans out-registering Democrats in the state, Gwaltney predicted increased political action for the Republicans.

At the same time, Republicans tend to vote more along party lines than Democrats, he said.

Democratic candidates mainly work to appeal to those who are likely to deviate from party lines, said John Dean of the Democratic voter participation office in Washington, D.C. "They craft speeches, appearances and overall media attention toward these people," he said.

Black and Gwaltney said the swing vote was not just part of a political cycle but a permanent institution.

Although Dean acknowledged that the frequency of swing votes had increased since the late 1940s and early 1950s, he wouldn't predict how important it would be in future elections. Instead, he said it would depend on the issues and the candidates themselves. "There are just too many variables," he said.

Thornburg battles Wilson in race for attorney general

By SANDY WALL
Staff Writer

Attorney General Lacy Thornburg has run his re-election campaign on his record, while Republican challenger Sam Wilson says he wants to be harsher on crime in the race to be North Carolina's chief law enforcement official and legal representative.

Thornburg's record includes a "laundry list" of legislation he wants passed, such as a crime victims' compensation plan, an automobile "lemon law" and a law to protect the elderly from physical abuse and neglect, Thornburg said in a telephone interview Monday.

Wilson's theme for the campaign is "getting tougher on crime," said John Carney, a communications assistant for the N.C. Republican Party in Raleigh.

Wilson and his campaign manager were campaigning with Gov. Jim Martin Monday and could not be

reached for comment.

Carney said Wilson favored stiffer sentences for drug dealers and the death penalty for killing a police officer.

Wilson has also proposed a "Drug Free School Zones" measure. Under its provisions, anyone caught selling drugs on school property or within 1,000 feet of it would receive a sentence of up to 30 years.

Thornburg, who has been attorney general since 1984, said he wants to request additional money from the Legislature for advanced equipment for state crime labs and for officers. New communications equipment for officers is also a priority, he said.

He also wants to enlarge certain areas of the State Bureau of Investigation.

"I expect to, as a matter of necessity, expand the environmental section," he said. That area needs

additional people and more state funding, Thornburg said.

Thornburg also wants to expand the consumer affairs division and the drug enforcement area, because both areas are overburdened.

Thornburg is a native of Mecklenburg County who served three terms

in the N.C. General Assembly and 16 years as a Superior Court judge.

Wilson, a native of Charlotte, practiced law there for 10 years before becoming legal counsel to Martin. Earlier this year, Wilson was named chairman of the N.C. Parole Commission

Both men earned their law degrees from UNC.

The attorney general's race does not attract much publicity, so many people may vote along party lines, Carney said. Although Democrats outnumber Republicans in North Carolina 2 to 1, Wilson has expressed

confidence that Gov. Martin's popularity will help him win the attorney general's seat. "There's a very good chance he can pull it out," Carney said.

Thornburg said he was confident he would win a second term. "It's going very well," he said.

Court candidates run low-key campaigns

By JASON BATES
Staff Writer

Although the race for the state Court of Appeals is almost over, most North Carolina voters know little about the race because the candidates, Republican Judge Robert Orr and Democratic Judge John Friday, are not allowed to discuss the issues.

Hubert Whitaker, Orr's campaign manager, said the Code of Judicial Conduct restrictions call for a low-

key, low-visibility campaign. Campaign workers for Orr have gone to almost every newspaper across the state in attempts to get some coverage for their candidate, Whitaker said in a telephone interview. Orr is beginning to receive some coverage, but it's not clear how thorough the publicity is, he said.

Friday said he was very pleased he received the endorsement of R.A. Hedrick, chief justice of the Court of Appeals.

Hedrick said he was voting for Friday because he "is an outstanding judge and is eminently qualified to

be on the court."

Friday also received the endorsement of Alan Hicks, his Democratic primary opponent. "My support of Judge Friday is simply because of party affiliations," Hicks said.

Orr has been endorsed by the North Carolina Association of Educators, the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers and the North Carolina League of Conservation Voters.

Karen Garr, president of the NCAE, said Orr is simply the "better candidate." The NCAE interviewed all the candidates and decided Orr

has a better background and is more careful in reaching decisions that are important to the NCAE, she said.

The NCAE and Orr share a genuine interest in public schools, Garr said. Orr also attended all the NCAE meetings across the state this fall, she said.

John Runkle of the N.C. League of Conservation Voters said, "We find Bob Orr's overwhelming qualifications, his broad experience and his demonstrated commitment to the environment compelling. Bob Orr will bring a sympathetic ear to the bench."

Students see election action as liaisons on UNC campus

By LAUREN MARTIN
Staff Writer

Nov. 8 may be just another day for many students, but for students active in campaign committees, Election Day is their goal and the end of months of hard work.

The Republican and Democratic candidates for president, governor and 4th District congressman all have UNC students working as campus liaisons for their campaigns.

"The regular headquarters realizes how important it is to have young people and young leaders as active parts of the campaign," said Wayne Goodwin, president of the UNC Young Democrats and co-chairman of Students for Bob Jordan.

"They want us there; they want to know what we think and what our suggestions are," Goodwin said.

"I feel we are very integrated with the regular campaign," said Anna Baird, chairwoman of Students for Martin. "I was picked by the Jim Martin committee in Raleigh, not by the College Republicans."

The committee has a focused

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— Wayne Goodwin

mission: to get absentee ballots to students who have shown an interest in Jim Martin or the Republican Party, she said.

"Main headquarters feels that is very important because absentee ballots have made the difference in elections in the past," Baird said.

Students for David Price work on many projects, said chairwoman Sandy Rierson. "We work on getting literature explaining David Price's qualifications out to everybody. We work at the phone bank at Orange County Democratic Headquarters. We help get

together ads and literature. We'll call registered Democrats and give them rides to the polls — we're very busy."

Goodwin said he is amazed at how much students do. "With people so busy with school and work, members are still truly giving of themselves for the causes they believe in."

He said he was especially pleased with the Democratic rally at UNC, which brought leading Democrats to campus. "That was a big success."

Education is vital issue for black students, leaders say

By STEPHANIE VON ISENBURG
Staff Writer

UNC's black students have become aware of the issues concerning them as individuals in Tuesday's election rather than campaigning as a group for a candidate, black student leaders say.

Black students took advantage of forums such as those with representatives from the Democratic and Republican parties to inform themselves of the elections, said Stephanie Beard, secretary of the Black Student Movement (BSM), a campus group that has no political affiliations.

"Students have taken an interest, but it's not important enough to them to become involved with a certain candidate," said freshman BSM member Mark Bibbs.

The issue concerning students most is education, especially financial assistance through loans, grants and scholarships, said Bibbs and BSM Vice President Tonya Blanks.

State candidates are proposing more funding for black colleges and

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— Stephanie Beard

more financial aid for black students, but presidential candidates have sidestepped black issues for fear of being labeled bigoted or racist, Beard said.

But UNC Young Democrats and College Republicans members say their candidates address black issues.

Democratic Gov. Michael Dukakis wants to provide opportunity for all, regardless of race, said Philip Sheridan, vice president of the Young Democrats. Bill Taylor, chairman of the College Republicans, said Vice President George Bush has similar goals in wanting to keep discrimina-

tion out of society.

Students who are interested in the election are interested because the issues affect everyone, Blanks said.

"The only way you can be informed is to actually go out and find out what the issues are and then make your decisions," Beard said.

Most black students know every vote will count because this election will be close, Bibbs said.

Not voting at all is like giving the other side the advantage, Beard said. "So many things that we depend on are issues being presented."