



BUNCH RECEIVES AWARD — Fernie Laughinghouse, right, is shown presenting a Distinguished Service Award from Area Five, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, to Lloyd C. Bunch, Route 1, Edenton. Bunch was honored at last week's meeting at the American Legion Building.

Bunch Cited For Distinguished Service

Lloyd C. Bunch, Route 1, Edenton, was recipient of a Distinguished Service Award at the annual meeting of Area Five, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, held at the American Legion Building on November 13. Presenting the award was Area Five Chairman, Fernie Laughinghouse of Washington.

In receiving this award, Bunch was recognized for his more than 35 years of work in the field of soil and water conservation. He has served as a county supervisor since 1944 and as Chairman of the five county Albemarle Conservation District since 1948. Bunch held the position of Area Five Chairman (which consists of 17 Northeastern North Carolina counties) from 1969 to 1976 and was president of the N. C. Association of Conservation Districts in 1967.


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Through his guidance and leadership the soil and water conservation program in our community, area and state has achieved many accomplishments such as the Soil Survey Program, the Watershed Program and the Resource Conservation and Development Program. His efforts as a member of the South's Third Forest Subcommittee have resulted in cost-share payments to land users in establishing forest management practices.

His dedication and concern for the conservation of our natural resources cannot be equaled here in the Albemarle District and probably across the state.

Joint Resolution Calls For Balanced Federal Budget

(This is the second in a series of three articles dealing with the 1979 General Assembly and Rep. Charles D. Evans, D-Dare.)

In the first article dealing with the 1979 General Assembly and the major legislation considered by it, I discussed with you the major item in each session which is the budget, and we also discussed taxes, tax reform and tax cuts; and we discussed certain items dealing with the criminal law reform. In this article I would like to discuss some of the major items dealing with constitutional amendments, insurance, education, election law and several other areas.

In the area of constitutional considerations, the General Assembly adopted a joint resolution that calls upon Congress to submit a Constitutional amendment to the states that would require a balanced federal budget, or in the alternative to call a constitutional convention to propose such an amendment. This was somewhat controversial, and North Carolina's resolution says that it will apply only to a convention that deals with only the subject of balancing the federal budget. If the convention were to go to other items, then the request from North Carolina would become null and void. The legal effect of this procedure is yet undecided, however.

The only proposed amendment to the N. C. Constitution that passed the 1979 General Assembly will require that all judges be lawyers, and it will be submitted to the people of our state in the 1980 general election for a vote. At the present time in the entire State of North Carolina there are only seven judges who are not lawyers or have a legal background. In my opinion, it will make our judicial system better. There are so many technical legal issues involved, especially in civil cases, that unless you have a legal background it is very hard to deal with them. I think this is a good bill and I think it will probably eliminate some of the justification for merit selection of judges which has been extremely controversial as well.

One of the proposed amendments that failed was a measure creating four-year terms for legislators, which I do think has some merit. Under the two-year system your legislators are running for office "all the time." The Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. Constitution failed for the fourth consecutive session, and if the Congress does not allow an additional extension of time, the 1981 session in North Carolina will be the last session at which it can be addressed.

In the area of insurance much debate again took place concerning the file and use system that was enacted by the 1977 session due to the fact that the Insurance Commissioner, John Ingram, was trying to get some of his rate making power back. However, the General Assembly did not see fit to allow this to happen, so basically, the

present system was continued as it is today. We did continue a six per cent annual cap on rates for private automobile liability and collision insurance and added homeowner's insurance to this and also workman's compensation insurance which caps will expire in the future if not continued.

Much in the education fields was discussed under my comments concerning the budget, however, there was one item that was not mentioned in this area. The most significant item in the area of education considered by the 1979 session of the General Assembly was the elimination of authority over private and religious schools by the State Board of Education including exempting them from the state administered competency tests but requiring them to administer a standardized test and making passage mandatory before graduation. Because of significant legal impacts and questions, I believe that this legislation will be very closely implemented and a watchful eye will be kept on the situation. A new board will be created to administer the community colleges and technical institutes and removing this from the State Board of Education. This will be done under the leadership of its new director, Dr. Larry Blake.

One item in the area of election law was something that will be of interest to certain counties in the First House District, particularly Dare County. Because of occurrences in Mecklenberg and other counties in our state, several unsuccessful candidates in primaries switched to unaffiliated independent status after the primary and ran in the general election as independent candidates. No longer will this be allowed to happen because the General Assembly passed measures that state that a person whose name appeared on the ballot in a state, county or municipal primary election may not have his

name printed on the general election ballot as an unaffiliated candidate for that same office in that same year. However, he may run as an unaffiliated candidate for a different office in that same year. A companion bill deals with party nominations by providing that a person who has changed his party affiliation from one party to another or has changed from an unaffiliated to an affiliated status within three months before the filing period opens is not eligible to file as a candidate in a party primary. In other words, any change in party status or affiliation must have been accomplished more than three months before the filing period or one cannot run in a party primary under those circumstances.

Also there were considerable measures considered in the area of absentee voting, and this was changed in several important respects. First, absentee voting is now available in all elections except fire district elections, meaning that voters may now cast absentee ballots in ABC, beer-wine, mixed drink and other elections. Also the potential for fraud has been reduced by tightening the absentee voting process in several aspects. Voter registration and challenge procedures were amended so that registration is easier and challenges are more difficult to make and prove. Although there was considerable sentiment to move the date of the presidential primary in North Carolina, this bill was ultimately defeated so that our presidential primary will be at the same time as our regular state primary which is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May.

There are several other items that I think would be of interest to you. Revisions were made to the open meetings legislation, which in my opinion, made it a better law by clarifying it. Efforts to change the state annexation law were defeated with intensive

lobbying by the League of Municipalities. Legislation was passed that will assist local governments in purchasing liability insurance by setting up a commission to investigate this and negotiate a contract. It will cover local government officials and law enforcement officers as well. One interesting item was the modification of the statute prohibiting public officials from contracting to provide services or supplies to the public body on which they are a member, such as a town board or a board of county commissioners. The General Assembly created a partial exemption for these officials under certain limited circumstances. Legislation was adopted dealing with the disposal of toxic substances and nuclear wastes in our state. Also the General Assembly saw fit to move the implementation and administration of the dredge and fill laws from the Marine Fisheries Commission to the Coastal Resources Commission.

As related to motor vehicles law, a staggered registration system was established so that

automobile owners will no longer be required to obtain a new license plate or sticker between January 1 and February 15 of each year. This new rotation process will begin in 1981. Another motor vehicle law of some interest will include a requirement that those convicted of driving under the influence of liquor or drugs must attend an alcohol and drug education traffic school as a condition to receiving a limited driving privilege, and I think that the period of suspension can also be reduced for those that attend such a school.

Although liquor legislation did not hold the center stage this year as it did in 1978 when the local option mixed drink law was enacted, several alcohol related bills were debated. A bill to extend to civic centers, convention centers and similar buildings a privilege of having a mixed drink permit was defeated in the House after passing the Senate.



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