

NOVANTHEALTH

RECOGNIZES

Vernon Robinson

AS

*News Maker
of The Year*

SAYING IT HIS WAY



A native of Los Angeles, Winston-Salem Alderman Vernon Robinson is a self-described "conservative reformer attempting to lead a Southern right coalition and having some success in changing education policy in North Carolina."

Regardless of whether one agrees with his positions, no one can argue that Robinson grabs headlines.

Vice chairman of Winston-Salem's Public Safety Committee and a member of the Public Works Committee, Robinson opposed suspending the use of pepper spray, led the successful fight to kill the baseball tax in Forsyth County, lost the fight to reduce city spending, and was at the center of the fight that changed the city's annexation policy. He also tried in vain to get the city out of the cemetery business.

A U.S. Air Force Academy graduate and former missile crew commander, Robinson staked out a bold position in 1991 after the nation's first charter school legislation passed in Minnesota. He began championing charter schools in North Carolina.

"I led the charter school movement in North Carolina," he says.

The former Winston-Salem State University professor criss-

crossed the state. He wrote op-ed pieces, gave speeches, and briefed parents and politicians. In 1993, he founded the North Carolina Education Reform Foundation. He also drafted a charter school bill.

"When the Republican majority was elected in the House," says Robinson, "my bill became the House position."

The State Senate, however, diluted the House version of the bill.

But all was not lost. Thanks to Robinson's advocacy, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified landmark charter school legislation in 1996.

During the charter schools fight, Robinson threw his hat in the ring. In 1992, he ran for the Republican nomination for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and in 1996 clinched the Republican nomination.

These days, the alderman hits the road to ensure that the charter school policy succeeds and to help schools get started. In Fall 1999, the state's 90 charter schools, six of which are in Forsyth County, will receive \$61 million in funding.

Call him what you like: Robinson is committed to bring market reform to primary and secondary education in our state.

*THE COMMUNITY YOU
SERVE SALUTES YOU*