

# Rental car tax faces scrutiny

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the entire delegation, and I don't think that support's there."



Tabor

"It might take two years," said John Tabor, a Republican City Council member who voted against the hike.

"Most Republicans would probably have some concern about raising taxes."

Arts & Science Council executive director Lee Keesler was in meetings Wednesday and unavailable for comment.

McCrorry originally vetoed the arts plan last month, arguing that the proposal included more buildings than needed in addition to the strain it would put on

existing city services. Tabor and fellow Republican Don Lochman supported McCrorry's veto, as did Democrat Patsy Kinsey. Tabor said he wouldn't openly campaign for the package's defeat in Raleigh, but would offer his opinion if asked.

"I think I will wind up talking to some people in the (county) delegation, but I'm not going to torpedo it," he said.

Opponents also point to the need for street repair and more police officers as more pressing than funding arts projects. But Wachovia Corp., which is planning a South Tryon Street campus of cultural facilities, wanted an answer quickly. Three arts projects — a 1,200-seat theater, new Mint Museum and modern-art museum —

would go on the Wachovia property as part of a "synthetic" TIF where the city would help finance part of the construction through new property taxes the project is expected to generate.

The car rental tax, if approved, would raise an expected \$80.7 million for the programs. Among the facilities that would benefit from the arts plan is the Afro-American Cultural Center, which would get \$17.9 million to expand.

The car rental tax will likely face a grilling because of who'll wind up footing the bill. Although supporters insist out-of-town visitors will foot the bill, opponents and car-rental operators counter an increase will impact Charlotte residents who rent cars most.

"If you're going to raise the

tax from 11 percent to 15 or 16 percent like Raleigh did, you might want to consider using it on roads," Tabor said.

Earle agrees. "If you're going to tax somebody, you want it to have some correlation," she said. "The people I've talked to find it strange that a car tax has anything to do with the arts."

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U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.) makes a point during the National African American School Board Members Summit last week in Charlotte. To the left are Reps. G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.) and Mel Watt of Charlotte.

PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

## Achievement requires dollars, sense

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every public school in America. At the core of No Child Left Behind are measures designed to close achievement gaps between different groups of students.



Leake

Earlier this month, NCLB made revisions to the act that NEA leadership backs, such as relaxing the requirement that 95 percent of all students in each subgroup in a school must take the test in order for the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

However, Weaver said the revision to have all teachers qualified and certified by 2006 without proper funding to make it happen is impossible. As he pointed out how the U.S. government bailed out the farming and airline industries with billions of dollars, he stated the same should be done for education.

Weaver received a thunderous applause as he encouraged the board members to continue to push for more funding for NCLB and teacher salary increase.

"Every time I hear him, I am re-energized to go into that classrooms, because that's where the front lines are," said Kimberly Richardson, treasurer of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association of Educators. "When we hear a voice that is strong and speaking out on behalf of public education, we believe that there is some light at the end of the tunnel." "He is about supporting public education for all children. We (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools) are incorporating some of the things that he brought up in his speech," said Vilma D. Leake, who represents District 2 on the school board. "Student achievement is first on our agenda as a board member of District 2. When I vote, I vote for the children. We also need to increase teachers' salaries and other support staff such as cafeteria workers to lower retention rates."

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 26.9 percent of urban teachers leave after their first year because of low pay rate, in the 2003 study "No Dream Denied-A Plague to American Children."

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largest professional employee organization and is committed to advancing the cause of public education. NEA's 2.7

million members work at every level of education, from pre-school to university graduate programs.

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