

# Campaign Under Way for \$3.1 Billion Bond Plan

**WORTH CIVILS**  
City/State & National Editor

After more than two years of debate, N.C. legislators have put to the voters a \$3.1 billion bond for building improvements at state-supported schools, kicking off a statewide campaign to educate voters and gain their support.

On May 18, the N.C. General Assembly unanimously approved the referendum for the bond, \$2.6 billion of

which will go to UNC schools and \$600 million to community colleges.

A week later, Gov. Jim Hunt signed the bill, giving voters the right to decide if they want to put their tax money toward renovations and additions of UNC and community college buildings.

"I've never signed a bill that I have more enthusiasm about than I have signed today," Hunt said. "When our facilities are in crisis, I mean our students are in crisis. If there has ever been

a bipartisan issue in the state, this is it."

After failing to get a referendum approved by the House last summer, bond supporters kept the package alive through a committee that formed to tour institutions across the state. The Joint Select Committee on Higher Education Facilities, including legislators and UNC officials, visited the schools to see the deteriorating conditions of the buildings.

The committee recommended to the state legislature a \$6.9 billion bond pack-

age, but legislators scaled that down to \$3.1 billion before they approved the referendum.

As the bond package stands now, UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University would receive almost \$500 million each, the most of any of the schools, if the referendum is approved. Some smaller UNC schools and historically black universities are only getting around \$50 million. But these amounts are set and will not change since legisla-

ture have put the bond to a referendum.

Now UNC and community college representatives, with the help of North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry, the state's largest business lobbying group, are involved in the campaign to gain voter support for the bond.

NCCBI President Phil Kirk said the group has formed a committee, composed of Gov. Hunt, three previous governors and several business and educational leaders in the state, that hopes to

raise \$3 million to promote the bond issue.

"The bond proposal is critical to help our community colleges and universities prepare for the future," Kirk said. "We have our work cut out for us, but it will certainly be easier because the universities and community colleges have a very strong following in our state."

The City/State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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