

# Bill Passes to Shield N.C. Tobacco Firms UNC Officials Unveil Final Plan for Campus

By MATTHEW B. DEES  
State & National Editor

RALEIGH, APRIL 6 — The N.C. General Assembly ended its one-day special session Wednesday by overwhelmingly passing a bill to shield state industries from hefty out-of-state lawsuits.

Signed into law immediately by Gov. Jim Hunt, the legislation places a \$25 million cap on the bond that N.C. companies must post to appeal another state's court decision. Without the provision, an expensive judgment could bankrupt a company and strip it of its ability to appeal.

Although it is applicable to all state businesses, the bill comes as a response to a lawsuit filed by Florida smokers against five tobacco companies, four of which have footholds in North Carolina.

A Florida jury began deliberations today to determine whether to award \$13.2 million in compensatory damages to the smokers. If this is approved, it will

set the stage for a class-action lawsuit to seek punitive damages for the estimated 500,000 sick smokers in Florida.

N.C. lawmakers fear this ruling could force the firms to pay whopping punitive damages upwards of \$100 billion. Such an action could bankrupt the companies and strike a crushing blow to the state's economy.

Legislators said they could not remain idle in the face of such dire circumstances, despite legal and philosophical objections from a handful of individuals.

Citing the 12,793 jobs and \$52.4 million in annual tax revenue tobacco firms provide for the state, lawmakers said the move was essential to preserving N.C.'s fiscal health. "Tobacco has been good to North Carolina," said Sen. Hamilton Horton, R-Forsyth, who represents a district with a strong tobacco industry presence.

"For 250 years, it's been one of our major crops. Tobacco has made it possible for our North Carolina farmers to make a good living with small acreage."

Sen. Betsy Cochrane, R-Davidson, said the bill was needed to prevent the snowball effect a serious blow to the tobacco industry would cause in the state. "This is more than the big tobacco companies," she said. "This is all the little businesses in all the communities where the tobacco industry undergirds the economy."

But a few legislators took issue with the legislation. Sen. Thomas Odum, D-Redell, was the only senator to vote against the bill. He argued that the \$25 million cap aimed to protect the interest of large corporations but ignored smaller businesses that might run into out-of-state legal woes. "I have to vote no because I look at it, on balance, it's basically unfair to the little man and the little woman."

Walker Reagan, a legislative counsel who helped draft the bill, said this concern had been examined. But lawmakers deemed that the state should intervene only in extreme cases where the state's entire economy was at risk.

Another main objection to the legislation was that it violated the "full faith and credit" clause of the U.S. Constitution, which requires states to abide by the laws of others. But a letter from the attorney general and legislative staff research laid this issue to rest for most lawmakers. "My questions regarding full faith and credit have been in large part answered by our staff," said Speaker Pro Tem Joe Hackney, D-Orange, and a Chapel Hill lawyer and farmer. "I have less concern than I did have."

In addition to the bill, the House unanimously passed a nonbinding resolution urging tobacco companies to buy more N.C. leaf to protect an industry already plagued by quota cuts and natural disasters this year.

But the Senate did not adopt a similar resolution, as several members deemed the move inappropriate. Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange, said, "It starts down a very bad road of trying to dictate to private businesses what they should do."

By KIM MINUGH  
University Editor

SEPT. 8 — UNC's nebulous yet widely discussed Master Plan is one step closer to being a clearly defined reality.

Top UNC officials met Thursday to witness the unveiling of the Final Comprehensive Plan, which was completed after environmental firms Andropogon Associates and Cahill Associates spent the summer assessing UNC's ecological features.

Late Chancellor Michael Hooker conceived the Master Plan in 1998 as a blueprint for future University growth.

The main goal for the plan is to allow for the campus' physical growth, while still serving UNC's threefold mission of teaching, research and public service.

"It's going to be a fluid plan that can change," said Adam Gross from Ayers Saint Gross, the firm hired to begin the plan's first projects.

The plan maps out construction projects that will use existing free space on campus and demolish some structures to establish recreational space.

It focuses on bringing the trademark essence of North Campus to South Campus, an area that is dominated by isolated buildings and roads that inhibit student interaction.

But no definite timeline exists for the plan, as construction will continue as funds become available through private funding or endowments.

Linda Convisor, project director for campus planning and facilities services, said no priority list exists to guide construction as officials obtain money.

But officials continue to forge ahead with the creation of the Master Plan.

Odum Village, the University's housing for married students, is targeted to be demolished and relocated to an area that will be determined later.

And new residence halls will add 3,000 beds across campus.

Nearly 1.2 million gross square footage is scheduled for condemnation, including Venable Hall, while 6.8 million gross square feet are earmarked for residence halls, buildings or parking decks.

The entire package entails 7.4 million gross square feet of construction. It also calls for the destruction of South Campus parking, freeing up 27 acres of land.

The parking will be replaced by parking decks that will be topped by a grassy quad to beautify the structure.

The proposed grassy quads are just one example of how the committee hopes to increase environmental presence on campus. "This process is not only about protecting what we have, but restoring what we've destroyed," said Michelle Cahill of Cahill Associates.

Although no additional land has yet been purchased, Master Plan officials are considering tracts of land south of South Campus.

But residents in that area, namely the Mason Farm neighborhood, are concerned that the University has not included them in Master Plan decisions.

Diana Steele, a Mason Farm resident and owner of Willow Hill School, said the plan worries her. "It is very unpleasant to have this hanging over our head for an indefinite amount of time."

Convisor said she thought Thursday's meeting was the most successful to date. "Communication will go on from here to see if we can move forward."

# Traditionally Male Halls Get Female Feel

By KAREY WUTKOWSKI  
Assistant University Editor

AUG. 23 — The addition of women to UNC's two oldest residence halls this year breaks from the 200-year-old tradition of creating a strictly male community in Old East and Old West.

When junior Katie Ahrendt first heard rumors last year that Old East and Old West residence halls were becoming coed, she was concerned about preserving this tradition.

"At first I was against letting girls in," said the Columbia, S.C., native. "I felt

there are so many girls on campus, there should be something left for the guys."

But after she had been assigned one of the spacious rooms in the oak-laden Old East, Ahrendt didn't put up a fight.

"I was really surprised I got in," she said. "You walk in, and it's so nice. It's like a hotel."

The second floor of Old East and the third floor of Old West have been converted into all-female floors beginning this semester.

Dean Bresciani, associate vice chancellor for student services, said a strong push to integrate the two residence halls

started two years ago, when members of student government and the Residence Hall Association approached him.

A series of open forums followed, revealing mixed opinions.

"All the women thought it was a good idea," Bresciani said. "The only people who had a problem were some of the guys and the alumni who thought it was a good tradition to maintain."

But Bresciani said the move garnered overwhelming support and that the change was way overdue. "It's somewhat artificial to place women and men in different buildings," he said. "The only

other institution that does that is prison."

To ease the transition, Bresciani said housing officials talked to all men living in the halls last year and assured them that no one would have to leave.

Junior Eric Boggs from Dallas, N.C., who has lived in Old West since his freshman year, said the men's largest concern was that the addition of women would disrupt the all-male community.

"We were really afraid that there would be a lot of sexual tension," he said. "It's fine and dandy with all guys, but if a hot girl moves in upstairs, it can mess things up."

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