

Fresh faces hit Raleigh Officials must fill \$1.2B hole

BY ERIC JOHNSON
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

RALEIGH — Before casting a single vote or introducing a single bill, freshman legislators might already have made their most lasting mark on the 2005-06 session of the N.C. General Assembly.

First-term lawmakers generally wield little influence on an individual basis, so the most important characteristic they bring to the legislature — at least in the short term — is party affiliation.

"(Freshmen) have the most impact in the beginning just in numbers, based on party registration," said Sabra Faires, chief of staff to former House Co-speaker Richard Morgan.

"The fact that there are X number of Democrats and X number of Republicans right now has more to do with what happens ... than any individual talents that they have."

Whether those individual talents are put to good use depends largely on committee assignments.

For freshmen and veterans alike, the ability to influence specific poli-

cies depends on securing a place on the relevant committee.

With electoral gains in both chambers, freshman Democrats have given their party firm control of the General Assembly. As a result, it will be Democratic leaders making the all-important committee assignments that are key to building influence within the legislature.

"(Committees) are where most of the work of the session gets done," said Sen. Jim Forrester, an eight-term Republican from Gaston and his party's deputy leader.

"If you're interested in a particular area — transportation or education or commerce — you put it down and make it a priority," Forrester said. "You'll get to be an expert in that area after a while."

Some lawmakers come into the legislature with specialties, Faires said, which might give them an advantage in securing committee placement and gaining credibility.

Rep. Laura Wiley, beginning her first term as a Republican from Guilford County, said freshmen can't be shy about making their

abilities known.

"I think you have to present your case on why you would be an asset to a committee," she said. "If you have experience, you have to let it be known."

Still, leaders from both parties said patience likely will be the most important skill for first-term lawmakers.

"I think they need to start off working hard and understand that they don't know everything when they get here, and they're not going to change the world overnight," said Sen. R.C. Soles Jr., the Democratic caucus chairman.

Faires said it is fairly common for freshmen to bide their time before adopting a more outspoken voice in the legislature.

"Freshman, as a whole, don't stand up and talk on the floor a whole lot. It's just like any place — when you're new, you don't want to put your foot in your mouth right away," she said.

Despite initial reticence on the part of first-term legislators, Soles said, they seem to gain a more prominent role with each new session.

"When I began in 1969, it was kind of an unwritten rule that freshman legislators sat down and kept quiet and smiled a lot," he said. "Now they're expected and are allowed to participate fully. I don't think they would allow themselves not to be able to participate fully."

BY KAVITA PILLAI
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

N.C. legislators are walking into a new session today carrying the burden of an estimated \$1.2 billion budget deficit — and everything from education to public safety should brace for a hit.

Even though Gov. Mike Easley and many legislators have vowed to keep education off the chopping block, the reality of the budget situation means that nothing is completely in the clear.

"If we end up remaining in the billion-plus shortfall, I don't think there's any sacred cows out there that are safe," said Rep. Bill Owens, D-Pasquotank.

Education, human resources, justice and public safety make up more than 90 percent of the budget and will be among the areas hardest hit by cuts, Owens said. "We're going to have to cut services dramatically in education," he said.

Sen. Richard Stevens, R-Wake, said he hopes legislators continue to make education a top priority, but he admitted that a number of factors have contributed to what will be a difficult budget season.

The state's economy is still struggling to recover, he said. In addition, sales- and income-tax hikes enacted four years ago are set to expire June 30, which would reduce revenues by about \$500 million. Also, the legislature had one-time use money to work with last year — money that will not be available this year.

Growth in public schools, com-

munity colleges and the university system, as well as a need for state employee pay increases, are adding to the problem, Stevens said. Moreover, counties will request that the state government take over their share of Medicaid costs — now more than \$400 million.

Owens said that a loss of manufacturing jobs in the textile and furniture industries and the further downfall of other major N.C. industries originally contributed to the economic situation. But the recovery has not been as rapid as anticipated.

"We're recovering, but we're not recovering as quickly as we did in past recessions," he said.

The legislature will not get to tackle the fiscal issues head-on until after Easley turns in his budget requests, which could happen in February or March. The House and Senate alternate every two years the chance to examine the budget first. This year, the Senate will get the first crack.

Despite fiscal restraints, Easley's proposal likely will include an expansion of his More at Four pre-kindergarten program.

But as newer programs get the funding they need, legislators need to take a hard look at other, older state programs, Stevens said.

"I think we need to take a comprehensive look at all state funding," he said. "There are certainly some programs that have been around for a long time that have seen better times and might need to expire."

"That requires discipline and effort and a lot of time by members of the General Assembly."

In addition to possibly extending sales taxes and income taxes to rein in the deficit, legislators are going to examine an increase in the cigarette tax, which is currently 5 cents per pack.

Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, who supports the increase, said a higher tax would help alleviate some of the state's health issues. North Carolina, he said, is simply behind the times with the nation's second-lowest tobacco tax. Only Kentucky's is lower, at 3 cents per pack.

"It's time we balanced that out," Rand said.

There also has been talk among legislators about an increase in the excise tax on beer and wine.

Finally, the push for a lottery to fund education will go into high gear this session. Supporters say they are optimistic that the legislation will pass. Owens said he plans to introduce a bill today to put a public opinion poll before voters.

Regardless of what measures the General Assembly enacts to bridge the gap, the fact of the matter is that there currently is not enough money to spare for new programs, not to mention existing ones.

"The past two or three years, we've had to look under every rock for any extra money," Owens said. "And all of that money has been exhausted."

Senators have hopes of victory for lottery

BY MEGAN MCSWAIN
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

A lottery proposal will once again be brought before the N.C. General Assembly today as legislators convene for the 2005-06 session.

The bill — which Rep. Bill Owens, D-Pasquotank, plans to introduce — would allow N.C. counties to place a public opinion poll about the lottery on the 2006 ballot.

Counties that approve the lottery would receive 25 percent of its revenue for local schools. The other 75 percent would go to other statewide educational needs such as scholarships, Owens said.

He said this year's lottery legislation will be similar to the one he proposed last year, which required 25 counties to approve the lottery for any to get it.

The education lottery has received support from Gov. Mike Easley both during his initial campaign and after his re-election.

And some believe the lottery will have a better chance this year than it has in the past.

"I think in the Senate it would have a strong chance of passing," said Amy Fulk, spokeswoman for Sen. President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, D-Dare.

North Carolina is locked in by states with education lotteries: South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia and, most recently, Tennessee. Many proponents say North Carolina is suffering from people crossing state lines to play the game.

"When residents are already playing, wouldn't it be better to keep the money here in our own state?" Fulk said.

Owens said many people who had been opponents of the lottery before have indicated to him that they plan to support it this time around.

But Sen. Richard Stevens, R-Wake, is not one of those legislators. "I just don't think we need to fund government with gambling."

The John Locke Foundation also opposes a lottery because it believes gambling shouldn't be run by the government.

Roy Cordato, vice president for research, said the foundation is not against the legalization of gambling, but against the government running a gambling operation.

"We think people have the right to spend their money any way they please — even stupidly on gambling," he said.

The foundation recognizes the proposal will be for a public opinion poll but is still against the bill because if the legislature places a public opinion poll on the ballot, they should do it consistently.

"For example, whenever they want to raise taxes, put it on the ballot as a public opinion poll," Cordato said.

The survival of the lottery bill hinges on the debate over the budget and taxes. Because if the state does not fund education through a lottery, it has to be done in another way, said Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life.

"The governor keeps asking a very important question. And that is, 'If not the lottery — what?'"

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

FREE PEER TUTORING

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY EVENINGS FROM 6 TO 9 PM

AT SECOND FLOOR OF DEY HALL
Begins on February 1st and 2nd

Peer tutors available on a drop-in basis—
first come, first served—to help in the following courses:

Tuesdays, 6-9pm starting Jan 27	Wednesdays, 6-9pm starting Jan. 28
Spanish 1-4	Spanish 1-4
French 1-4	French 1-4
German 1-4, etc.	German 1-4, etc.
Russian	Arabic 102X
Italian 1-4	Italian 1-4
Arabic 102X	Japanese 101 & 102X
Psychology 10	Psychology 10
Geology 11	Math 10, 30, 31, 32, 33
Math 10, 30, 31, 32, 33	Econ 10, 101
Econ 10, 100, 101	Statistics 11
Statistics 31	Business 71 (Accounting)
Business 71 (Accounting)	Biology 11, and others
Chemistry 11, 21, 41, 61, 62	
Biology 11, 50	
Philosophy 22	

For additional help in physics, chemistry and math, try these free resources:

The Math Help Center
224 Phillips
3:30-7:30pm M-Th

The Chemistry Resource Center
225 Venable Hall
12:00-6:00pm M-Th


The Physics Tutorial Center
210 Phillips
8am-6pm M-F (as tutors are available)
See schedule on door for Phys 16, 24, 25, 26, 27

Questions? Call 962-3782

Sponsored by the Peer Tutoring Program and UNC Learning Center

\$7.77 Student Value Menu

1. Medium 1-Topping Pizza
2. Large Cheese Pizza
3. 2 Small Cheese Pizzas
4. Breadstix, Cinnastix & a 20 oz. drink
5. 1 Small 1-Topping Pizza & a 20 oz. drink



UNC Pizza Headquarters
412 E. Main Street, Carrboro
929.022.46

FREE CHEESY BREAD
WHEN UNC BREAKS 100 POINTS!

Get a free bread side (breadstix, cinnastix, cheesy bread) with purchase of any size pizza the day after the UNC basketball team scored more than 100 points the day before.

EXPIRES 4/30/05

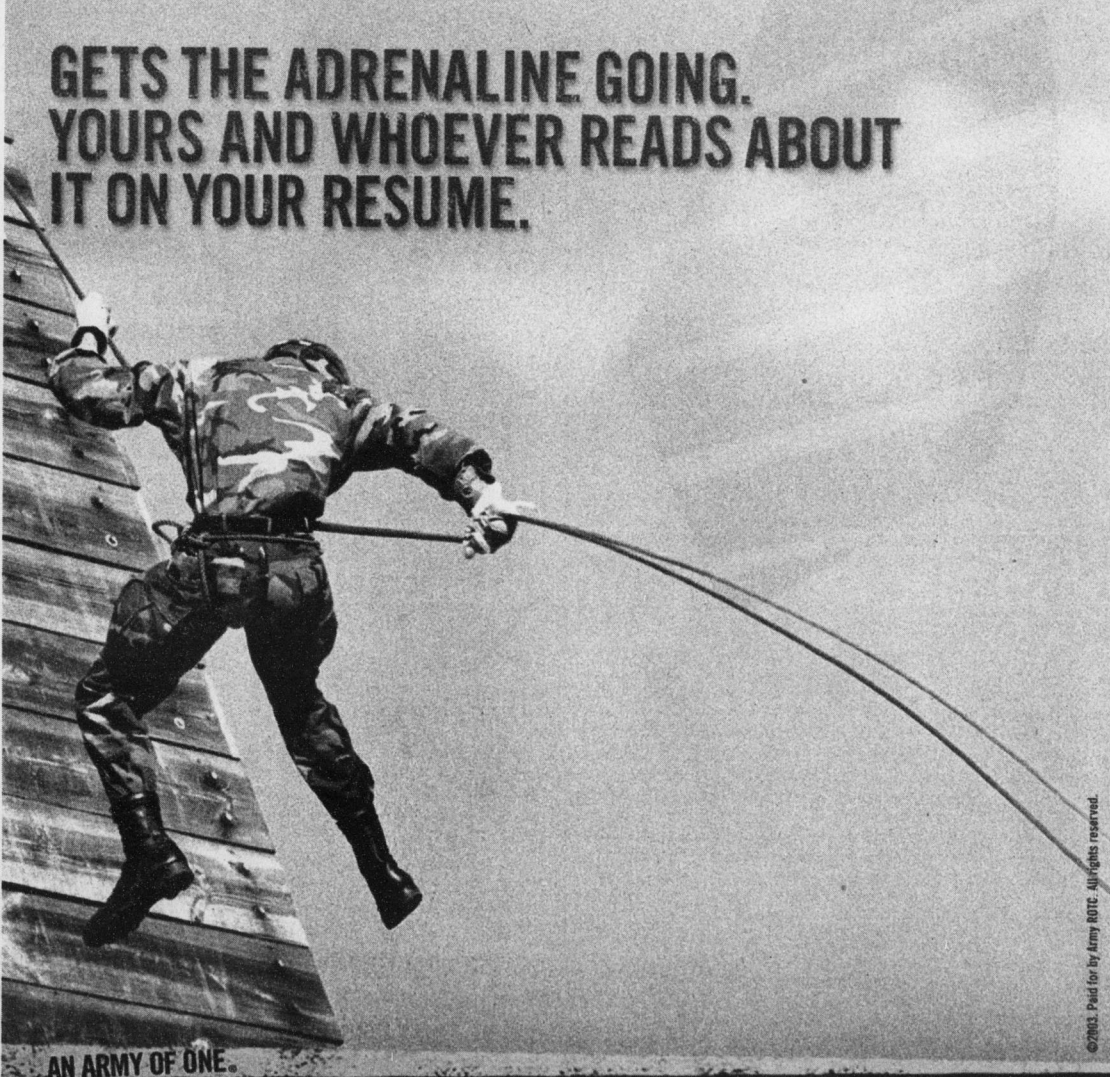
ROOMMATE SPECIAL

3 Small 1 Topping Pizzas for \$13.49

Ask about our delicious side items!

We accept UNC One Cards
(Delivery on campus only)

GETS THE ADRENALINE GOING. YOURS AND WHOEVER READS ABOUT IT ON YOUR RESUME.



AN ARMY OF ONE.

The Army ROTC Leader's Training Course is a paid 4-week summer experience that marks the beginning of your career as an Officer, a leader of the U.S. Army.

ENROLL IN ARMY ROTC
BECOME AN ARMY OFFICER

APPLY NOW FOR SUMMER LEADERSHIP INTERNSHIPS & ARMY OFFICER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES!
For more information, contact UNC Army ROTC at morrisjs@email.unc.edu or 962-5546.