

**BUSH**

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Craig Smith, a professor of communications studies at California State University-Long Beach, added that Bush already has had major success in foreign policy.

"He succeeded in bringing the people (in Iraq) to the table. There is more stability in Afghanistan, and the demise of (Palestinian leader Yasser) Arafat has opened a door."

That leaves Bush able to focus on issues at home. Aside from Social Security, he's set to focus on the Republican Party's attempts to make a power move on the judicial system.

With the revelation that Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, a strict conservative, has thyroid cancer, many are speculating about his replacement.

Crockett said filling such a vacancy could be Bush's most difficult order of business.

"There is the potential for a huge battle," he said. "He's going to have to keep solid relations with his own party ... and take head-on this issue of the filibuster."

GOP leaders in Congress want to disallow the use of the delay tactic in votes on judicial nominees.

But Bush must tread carefully to keep from bringing Congress to a standstill — and from risking his own political capital while the government faces other crises.

"The federal government is running very large deficits — \$420 billion projected for the 2005 fiscal year," said Cal Jillson, professor of political science at Southern Methodist University. "So long as he has those very large deficits it is difficult to launch any new programs."

Those national issues have been set aside temporarily because the president has been sidetracked by smaller issues, said Thad Beyle, UNC professor of political science. "Some things have distracted

the president from what he should be doing," he said.

These diversions might have had some effect on Bush's popularity.

A statewide poll taken by Elon University from April 18-26 puts Bush's overall job approval at 44.9 percent, down from 46 percent in February. The president's approval rating on his approach to Social Security reform is 27.5 percent, down from 28.9 percent.

The Elon poll used a total sample of 842 adults with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.38 percentage points.

Still, Bush isn't a man who is easily deterred, and he said he'll continue his charge.

"We now move forward with confidence and faith," Bush said during his Feb. 2 State of the Union address. "Our nation is strong and steadfast."

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**EASLEY**

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think tank that does not support the lottery. "It would be a loss for the state, but it would be a win in his column."

Easley considers the lottery part of education reform, said Ran Coble, director of the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research.

One of the biggest challenges facing the governor is the N.C. Supreme Court ruling in the Leandro case, Mejia said. In 1997 and again in July 2004, it declared that some rural schools fail to give students a "basic and sound education," as the state constitution requires.

Easley formed the Education First Task Force in May 2004 to determine how to provide all students with an exceptional education that prepares them for higher

education, work or the military.

More than half of the state's budget now is spent on education, but deficits are shrinking funds.

Experts from both ends of the political spectrum say Easley is continuing the popular strategy of attacking the budget crisis at the surface instead of getting at its root: an outdated tax structure.

Some say the sales tax was designed for a manufacturing society and is not applicable to services and products bought online.

"The legislature is going from session to session putting a Band-Aid on the cuts," Coble said.

Progressives think Easley is overlooking another major source of revenue in higher taxes for wealthy residents, Mejia said. Easley's budget lowers income tax for the top bracket from 8.25 percent to 7.75 percent during the next two years.

Easley has been mentioned as a possible 2008 candidate for president, and many say he's capable of the job, Hood said. He has not expressed any interest in running.

"I don't want to damn him with faint praise. But Easley is one of the most successful Democratic legislators in the South," Hood said.

Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, said the national Democratic Party should take notice of Easley's crossover appeal.

Guillory praised "his blending of a message about advancement on education, advancement on economic development with his posture ... as a guy who likes hunting, a guy who likes NASCAR."

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**SYSTEM**

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progressed.

Budget cuts go deeper and deeper each year, he said, and he has found himself spending more time trying to articulate the university's needs.

Despite the stepped-up lobbying efforts, the state's joint education appropriations subcommittee approved only \$1.99 billion for the 2005-06 fiscal year and \$2.02 for 2006-07.

With costs increasing for agencies and programs across the state, many legislators are looking toward new sources of revenue to help close the gap in education funding.

Rep. Larry Bell, D-Sampson, said he would be willing to search for untapped sources of state revenue, specifically a raise in the tobacco tax.

"I would support (it) if I knew it was going to go to education and state employee salary increases," he said.

A special Senate committee also is examining a bill that would establish an education lottery that could help ease the pain of the slashes to funding.

The pressure to rein in state spending has been equally strong, and any move to raise taxes will likely prompt sharp debate in the legislature, similar to that already surrounding the lottery.

**A new direction**

Wilson said the state's budget situation will not change the criteria or qualifications the board looks for in candidates for president.

Molly Broad was an official in

the California State University system before landing the job as head of the UNC system.

But instead of a higher education official, former White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles has come out as an early favorite in the candidate pool.

Bowles already has garnered the support of the Republican caucus in the General Assembly, as well as notable Democratic support.

"I'm sure that Erskine Bowles could really bring some new ideas to the table," Bell said. "I have a lot of confidence in him. He'd be an asset to the university system."

Although Bowles has proven he can balance a budget — something increasingly important in the job of UNC-system president — the search will not end with the former Senate candidate, Wilson said.

"Bowles has declared his interest, and we understand and are grateful he would consider this position," he said. "But we're going to do a national search and take our time."

"We want a strong leader with strong management skills ... and who's politically savvy. The budget issue will not change the qualifications. It's just a fact of life now."

And during its meeting last week, Wilson persuaded the Board of Governors to go against tradition by revealing the contenders' names before a final decision is reached.

"The president of the University of North Carolina lives in a public world in all matters and all things," he said during the meeting. "Someone who is coming into that position might as well get used to it."

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**FREEDOM**

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on the basis of personal characteristics, including religion and sexual orientation. But the fraternity has insisted that non-Christian members would dilute its mission.

When the case went to court, U.S. District Court Judge Frank Bullock Jr. reinstated AIO's official recognition until the case closes — marking the only time a federal court has ordered a public university to change its nondiscrimination laws to protect First Amendment rights.

Shelton worried about the implications of the decision. "I wouldn't be surprised if the issue resurfaces, if not with this fraternity, then with other campus groups," he said.

Administrators said they intend to boost efforts to make sure discrimination does not infiltrate the classroom.

"A lot of people acting in good faith with the best intentions can still run into trouble," Shelton said. "As administrators, we have to continue to articulate the importance of academic freedom."

Judith Wegner, chairwoman of the faculty, conducted a forum earlier this month for teachers to share stories and define what academic freedom means to them.

"It's about being able to teach effectively and to not have someone look over your shoulder judging you," Wegner said.

"It's about being fair to students so that they have open inquiries because that's why they're here."

"It's about being respected for the things you do."

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**ZONING**

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extended too far.

OI-4-zoned developments now give the council only 90 days for review and have special standards related to building density and height.

District modifications proposed last fall aim to choke off problems with what council members perceive as insufficient review time and extraordinary leniency.

Under the changes, UNC officials would have to submit a concept plan prior to a development application. Changes also would give the council 30 days of added review time on all applications.

Foy called the changes a

tweaking.

Anna Wu, director of facilities planning, said the University has discussed its development standards with affected neighborhoods and has already implemented, in some way, the proposed changes.

"(The changes) are a result of what we have learned, what has worked," Wu said.

In a letter, Nancy Sutfenfield, vice chancellor for finance and administration, stated that UNC supports most of the "tweaks."

Further down the road, the University must also take a look at Carolina North itself. Next month, Waldrop will represent the plans for the campus to the UNC Board of Trustees — and update campus leaders on the status of the Horace

Williams Airport.

The airport, which lies on the Carolina North land, must remain open until UNC can find a new spot for an airfield. That could lead Waldrop and the University to fundamentally alter plans for the satellite campus.

Though much of the current discussion centers on projects that will not be realized for decades, officials agree that planning together will help to avoid future conflicts.

"It demonstrates how important it is from the perspective of both parties," Foy said. "Nobody's saying anything different."

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