

Click on the blue bill numbers below [like [S 539](#)] to see the actual legislation introduced in the N.C. General Assembly.

DEMOCRACY NORTH CAROLINA 2005-06 DEMOCRACY AGENDA

Democracy North Carolina's mission is to make real the promise of "one person, one vote" – the bedrock principle of equal rights and self-determination. The money chase in campaigns must not be a barrier for candidates or voters. Elections and politicians must be accountable to voters, not wealthy special interests. To increase the power and participation of voters and decrease the influence of special-interest donors, we recommend:

LESS BIG MONEY

IMPROVE JUDICIAL CAMPAIGN REFORM ([S 539](#), added to [H-1024](#))

The new public financing program for statewide judicial candidates is the first example of "voter-owned" elections in North Carolina. Changes are needed to make the program work better, expand the Voter Guide, and improve wording on the "check-off" for the NC Public Campaign Fund. **Result:** These changes were adopted as part of H-1024 and are now law; see sections 10 to 18 and 8.

EXPAND VOTER-OWNED ELECTIONS ([S 1042](#))

Public financing should be expanded. A good "next step" after judges: the agency heads who make up the Council of State (Auditor, Treasurer, Attorney General, Commissioners of Insurance, Agriculture and Labor, etc.) The Meg Scott Phipps scandal shows what can happen when these "down-ticket" candidates get little attention and rely heavily on the special interests doing business with the agency. They need a source of "clean" money. ALSO: Launch a pilot public financing program for legislative elections to demonstrate its value ([H-1851](#)). **Result:** We made some progress on these bills in 2005-06, with 72 co-sponsors signing up for Council of State public financing and passing the legislative pilot through one House committee; we will renew these efforts in 2007.

AUTHORIZE LOCAL PUBLIC FINANCING ([H 875](#))

Cities and counties could sponsor their own public financing programs in local elections, but they first need authorization in state law. In 2004, the N.C. Home Builders Association killed a bill to grant such authorization. Why? Because builders, Realtors and developers are the major source of money in local elections, and they don't want your public officials to have a viable alternative! **Result:** No action was taken on this bill because of our focus on other measures.

REGULATE LOBBYING ([H-1843](#))

Special interests spend millions to lobby state officials, but most of it is unreported. It all should be quickly disclosed, including business ties between officials and lobbyists' clients. Big gifts, fundraising, and trips should be banned. Legislators should also wait a year before becoming lobbyists. An Ethics Commission should enforce new conduct rules. **Result:** Major changes passed in [S-612](#) in 2005 and even more far-reaching

changes were adopted in H-1843 in 2006, after the scandals involving House Speaker Jim Black added pressure for reform.

MORE VOTERS IN

PROTECT THE RIGHT TO VOTE (S 223/H 238)

Every vote must be counted. Electronic voting machines should have a voter verifiable paper trail and secure software that is controlled by trained election officials. Add voting places, machines and staff to enhance accessibility. Expand and equip more "one-stop" voting locations. Increase training of precinct workers. Improve administration so ex-felons understand their voting rights (H 1256). Maintain the availability and rules for using provisional ballots. **Result:** Major legislation to require a voter-verified paper trail passed, along with a pilot for super polling sites and a variety of other measures to protect the right to vote, including clarification that out-of-precinct voting is legal.

BEGIN SAME-DAY REGISTRATION (H 851/S 954)

North Carolina ranks in the bottom 15 nationally in voter turnout. Same-day registration would allow a citizen to register and vote during the "one stop" early voting period, with safeguards against fraud. Many voters don't realize they are not registered at their current address until after the registration deadline (25 days before an election). SDR would boost turnout, especially for young people. **Result:** H-851 narrowly passed the House Election Law committee in 2005; it will be a major priority for Democracy North Carolina in the 2007-08 session.

ENACT INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING (H 1024)

Costly run-off elections could be eliminated with rank voting or Instant Run-Off Voting (if your first choice is not among the top vote-getters, your vote goes to your second-choice candidate). Fringe or third party candidates also won't become "spoilers" because their votes will be re-allocated if they do poorly. Local governments should be authorized to use Instant Run-Off Voting in local elections. **Result:** This bill is now law, authorizing pilot programs using IRV for ten cities in 2007 and ten counties in 2008. IRV will also be used to settle close judicial races with multiple candidates for a seat that becomes vacant after the primary.

CHANGE ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTING (H 386)

Giving all the state's electoral votes to the Presidential candidate who wins by even a slim majority disenfranchises many voters. By state law, North Carolina's 15 electoral votes could be allocated based on the candidate's popular vote statewide or by who wins in each congressional district (as in Maine and Nebraska). **Result:** No action was taken on this.