

# Democracy North Carolina

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## Legislators Improve On Disclosure Reports, 22 Singled Out For Special Attention

Today is the deadline for state legislators and other candidates to file the fourth in a series of six disclosure reports that provide details about their income and spending for the 2008 election cycle. The reports can reveal a pattern of support from a special interest or type of donor, as well as who the campaign hires as consultants.

"We've seen a welcome improvement in the level of detailed information provided by candidates for state office over the past few years," said Bob Hall, executive director of the election reform watchdog group Democracy North Carolina. "There are more requirements about more items, and happily a large number of politicians are going beyond the minimum to provide important details that help the public understand the sources and uses of money in political campaigns."

A team of interns working with Hall identified a group of 22 state legislators who are doing a superior job in providing details about the occupation and employer of their donors and the purposes of their campaign expenditures. "These lawmakers are establishing themselves as role models for doing the right thing when it comes to providing a clear picture of their campaign finances," Hall said.

**The project focused on lawmakers who had raised at least \$15,000 from individuals by the deadline for the primary report. Interns in the "Democracy Summer" program of Democracy NC analyzed dozens of reports and thought it was important to highlight legislators who provided detailed information for 98% or more of their contributors, plus descriptions of their expenses.**

The group of 22 receiving recognition includes President Pro Tem [Marc Basnight](#), House Speaker [Joe Hackney](#), and Rep. [Tricia Cotham](#), the Mecklenburg County legislator who replaced former Speaker Jim Black. The scandal swirling around Black prompted a new round of ethics reforms that included tightened campaign finance disclosure rules.

The other state legislators, Democrats and Republicans, who each raised at least \$15,000 from individuals by the primary, are: Representative [Alice Bordsen](#), [Jim Crawford](#), [Margaret Dickson](#), [Rick Glazier](#), [Bruce Goforth](#), [David Lewis](#), [Deborah Ross](#), [Verla Insko](#), [Russell Tucker](#), and [Jennifer Weiss](#); and Senators [Charlie Albertson](#), [Doug Berger](#), [Pete Brunstetter](#), [Linda Garrou](#), [Neal Hunt](#), [Clark Jenkins](#), [Richard Stevens](#), [A. B. Swindell](#), and [Jerry Tillman](#).

"It's crucial for the public to have the full picture about the candidates before they vote – and the pattern of where a campaign's money comes from is an important part of that picture," said Kaitlin Stollbrink, a 2008 East Carolina graduate from Apex who begins law school at UNC-CH in the fall. "A voter can look at these reports and tell the diversity or the concentration of economic interests backing the candidate."

Asked about who didn't comply with the disclosure rules, Hall said the focus of the interns' report was on who was doing a model job. "The media and watchdog groups shouldn't just do the 'gotcha story' when something goes wrong. It's also important to point out when public officials go beyond the minimum to provide extra service to the public. That helps set the context for what are realistic expectations rather someone's idealistic or impractical standards."

Hall said the 22 legislators singled out are on the way to winning special recognition with the group's "Sunshine Award" for full disclosure if they continue their superior reporting. Other legislators and candidates who provide a high level of detailed information will qualify when the final reports are analyzed after the election.

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