

# Democracy North Carolina

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## **STATE LEGISLATORS RECEIVE DEMOCRACY NC'S *SUNSHINE AWARD*, MARKING A YEAR FOCUSED ON OPENNESS IN NC GOVERNMENT**

Thirty-two state legislators are receiving a surprise Christmas present this week – a “Sunshine Award” from the watchdog group Democracy North Carolina. The biennial award is given to lawmakers who file “superior” reports disclosing details about their campaign expenses and donations.

Award winners include 20 House members and 12 state Senators. The list has 22 Democrats led by House Speaker Joe Hackney and Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight and 10 Republicans led by Paul Stam and Tom Apodaca. Winners represent all parts of the state and include newcomers David Guice and Sandra Hughes and senior veteran R.C. Soles. *See next page for the complete list.*

“Our staff and interns evaluated the reports of all 170 legislators elected in 2008 and found these 32 went well beyond the minimum of the law to give the public valuable information about where they get their campaign money and how it’s spent,” said Bob Hall, the group’s executive director.

“The quality of reporting has greatly improved in the past five years and dozens of legislators are doing a good job, especially with the help of well-trained campaign treasurers,” he said. Award winners: (1) filed their six reports in 2007-2008 on time and in an accessible format, (2) listed the purpose of 99% of their expense items over \$50 and (3) provided economic interest or employer information for 99% of the dozens of individuals who gave more than \$50 to their campaign.”

“Strong disclosure laws protect the public interest and help educate voters,” Hall noted. The reports reveal, for example, whether a legislator gets support from a broad range of interests or is more narrowly backed by attorneys or chiropractors, developers or agribusiness.

The Sunshine Awards symbolize the increasing emphasis on openness and accountability in state government, Hall said. “You could call 2009 the ‘Transition Year for Greater Openness.’ It began with the new governor adopting measures for greater disclosure and campaign reform and ended with a top aide of the old governor facing questions about his role in possible illegal activities revealed through campaign reports and emails obtained under the state’s open records law.”

“What’s especially different this year is that top public officials took the initiative themselves to clean house and push their own reforms,” Hall continued. He pointed to (1) Gov. Bev Perdue’s exposing gifts by Verizon to officials in Gov. Easley’s Department of Transportation and her executive orders against gifts and for expanded disclosure; (2) Treasurer Janet Cowell’s removal of a top investment fund manager and directives about gifts and lobbying; and (3) Speaker Joe Hackney’s promotion of increased ethics and campaign finance training for Democratic House members and his leadership for new ethics and public campaign financing legislation.

Several bills to address the “pay to play” culture passed either the state House or Senate in 2009 and will likely receive considerable attention in 2010.

“The public is demanding a higher standard of ethical conduct and more accountability to voters rather than narrow self-interests. Disclosure helps shine a light on problems, but it takes the right mix of restrictions, incentives, enforcement and leadership to change the political culture,” Hall said. “We’ve made real progress in North Carolina, and we have plenty of room for improvement.”

## **32 Legislators Win Democracy NC's 2009 *Sunshine Award***

These legislators provided superior disclosure on their campaign reports in the 2008 election cycle.

They: (1) filed timely reports, via E-filing system or computer format; (2) listed the occupational information for 99% of the individual donors giving over \$50 – and had at least 25 such donors in 2008; and (3) provided information about the purpose of 99% of their expenditures over \$50. Many other legislators satisfied some of these criteria but these 32 stand out for doing the best job.

<b>Offc</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Dist</b>	<b>Legislator</b>	<b>Counties Rep. (whole or part)</b>	<b>Access</b>
H	Dem	49	Lucy T. Allen	Franklin, Halifax, Nash	E-File
H	Dem	63	Alice L. Bordsen	Alamance	E-File/Comp
H	Rep	14	George G. Cleveland	Onslow	E-File
H	Dem	100	Tricia Ann Cotham	Mecklenburg	E-File
H	Dem	44	Margaret Dickson	Cumberland	E-File
H	Dem	45	Rick Glazier	Cumberland	E-File
H	Rep	113	W. David Guice	Henderson, Polk, Transylvania	E-File
H	Dem	54	Joe Hackney	Chatham, Moore, Orange	E-File
H	Dem	29	Larry D. Hall	Durham	Comp.
H	Dem	81	Hugh Holliman	Davidson	Comp.
H	Dem	18	Sandra Spaulding Hughes	New Hanover, Pender	Comp.
H	Rep	28	James H. Langdon Jr.	Johnston, Sampson	Comp.
H	Rep	53	David R. Lewis	Harnett	Comp.
H	Dem	34	Grier Martin	Wake	E-File
H	Rep	13	Pat McElraft	Carteret, Jones	E-File
H	Dem	38	Deborah K. Ross	Wake	Comp.
H	Rep	37	Paul Stam	Wake	Comp.
H	Dem	3	Alice Graham Underhill	Craven, Pamlico	E-File
H	Dem	12	William L. Wainwright	Craven, Lenoir	Comp.
H	Dem	35	Jennifer Weiss	Wake	E-File
S	Dem	10	Charlie Albertson	Duplin, Lenoir, Sampson	E-File
S	Rep	48	Tom Apodaca	Buncombe, Henderson, Polk	E-File
S	Dem	1	Marc Basnight	Beaufort, Camden, Currituck, Dare, Hyde, Pasquotank, Tyrrell, Washington	E-File
S	Dem	32	Linda Garrou	Forsyth	E-File
S	Dem	45	Steve Goss	Alexander, Ashe, Watauga, Wilkes	E-File
S	Rep	36	Fletcher Hartsell Jr.	Cabarrus, Iredell	E-File
S	Dem	23	Eleanor Kinnaird	Orange, Person	E-File
S	Rep	2	Jean Preston	Carteret, Craven, Pamlico	E-File
S	Dem	8	R. C. Soles Jr.	Brunswick, Columbus, Pender	Comp.
S	Rep	17	Richard Stevens	Wake	Comp.
S	Dem	11	A. B. Swindell	Nash, Wilson	E-File
S	Dem	27	Don Vaughan	Guilford	Comp.

Based on assessing reports filed with the State Board of Elections, the Board's data entry and its compliance audits.