

Democracy South

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Guns and Political Money in North Carolina

May 12, 2000

NRA STATE CONTRIBUTIONS

Since 1990, the National Rifle Association has rapidly increased the amount of money it has invested in North Carolina politics. Not counting contributions to Congressional candidates, the NRA PAC spent \$53,100 to aid North Carolina state-level candidates and parties during the 1998 election, more than eight times the \$6,300 they gave in the 1989-1990 cycle. By contrast, total PAC donations to N.C. state-level politics did not even double during this same period, from 1990 to 1998.

NRA PAC Spending on N.C. General Assembly/State Candidates and Committees

1989-90	\$ 6,300	1995-96	\$46,504
1991-92	18,579	1997-98	53,104
1993-94	36,777	Total 1989-98	\$161,264

The biggest jump in dollars came in the 1994 election cycle when the NRA PAC spread \$36,725 among 90 state legislative candidates, mostly Republicans. Nationally, the NRA played an important role in financing the Republican capture of the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1994 election, and they helped Republicans in North Carolina win a majority of seats in the General Assembly for the first time in the 20th Century.

Although it tilts heavily to Republicans nationally, the NRA has long given to key Democratic leaders in North Carolina. Records show that it gave the N.C. Senate Committee within the state Democratic Party \$6,000 in 1998. This committee is controlled by Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight and it doles out money to favored state Senate candidates in races viewed as important for the Democrats to maintain their majority in the state Senate. Here is a list of the top beneficiaries of NRA PAC money in the 1998 election cycle:

1997-98 Top Beneficiaries of NRA PAC Money Among N.C. Legislative Candidates and Committees (Includes independent expenditures by NRA for candidates)

NC Senate Committee	\$6000.00**	House Democrats Legislative	
Brubaker, Harold J	4000.00	Campaign Committee	1000.00***
Daughtry, Leo	4000.00	House Republican Comm	1000.00
Little, Teena S	2952.40*	Morgan, Richard T	1000.00
McKoy, Henry	2846.72*	Sexton, Wayne	1000.00
Clark, R L	2163.52*	Walend, Trudi	796.34*
Ledbetter, Jesse I	2163.13*	Cansler, Lanier M	791.23*
Watson, Cindy	2040.08*	Crawford, Mark F	791.23*
Hardy, Edwin M (Sandy)	2028.53*	Sherrill, Wilma M	790.84*
Miner, David	1915.77*	Pate, Louis M	786.91*
Blust, John	1743.70*	Eddins, Rick	713.45*
NC Republican Party	1500.00		
Hall, Lyndon	1233.21*		
Ramsey, Liston B	1233.21*		
Odom, T L (Fountain)	1090.60*		
Gillespie, R Mitchell	1031.67*		

* Includes independent expenditures not coordinated with candidate

**Committee controlled by Marc Basnight

***Committee controlled by Jim Black

During the 1990s, the gun lobby actually expanded its statutory protection in some areas. With bill drafting help from NRA lobbyists and special access to top leaders gained through its political contributions, the pro-gun forces won the right for citizens to carry concealed weapons and blocked local governments from instituting gun-control measures. Gun control supporters won a new North Carolina law to track guns used in crimes, and they hope to revive efforts this year to strengthen child-safety provisions for stored guns, as well as enact measures that would limit sales of weapons to youths and others at gun shows.

The 1999 state House passed a bill (HB 938) to prohibit local governments from suing gun manufacturers or otherwise holding them liable for any injury that might arise from the use of a firearm. The chief House leader, Wayne Sexton (R-Stoneville) received \$1,500 from the NRA PAC for his 1996 and 1998 campaigns. The bill passed by a 93 to 23 majority in April 1999. The **23 opponents – mostly African Americans and women – received no money from the NRA PAC** in their 1996 or 1998 campaign, while the proponents benefited from \$31,600 in direct contributions or independent expenditures in their 1996 and 1998 races.

**1999 N.C. House: Correlation of NRA PAC Money
To Votes on Firearms Local Preemption (HB 938)**

Average Support from NRA PAC for 1996-98

Voting "Yes" (for gun lobby)	\$ 340
Voting "No" (against gun lobby)	\$ 0

HB 938 is eligible for consideration in the Senate during the current session. The chief sponsor on the Senate side is Fountain Odom (D-Charlotte). The NRA PAC spent \$1,091 in independent expenditures to aid Odom's campaign in 1998, making him the top beneficiary of NRA support among Senate Democrats. He received a \$500 contribution from NRA PAC in his 1996 campaign. As mentioned earlier, the Senate Democrat's election committee got \$6,000 in 1998; in addition, Senate President Pro Tem received \$2,000 from NRA PAC in 1996.

NRA FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The gun lobby, led by the NRA, gave \$2.2 million in hard and soft money contributions to federal candidates and parties during the 1995-96 election, with 80% going to Republicans. (The NRA gave \$1.8 million of that total.) In March 1996, the House of Representatives passed HR 125 which repealed the assault weapon ban; the Senate did not vote on the bill. The Center for Responsive Politics analyzed the votes on HR 125 ("Assault Weapon Ban Repeal") and showed the link between gun money and the votes:

**1996 Congress: Correlation of Pro-Gun Money
To Votes on Assault Weapon Ban Repeal**

Average Contribution Rec'd from Pro-Gun PACs in 1996

Voting "Yes" (for gun lobby)	\$ 4,450
Voting "No" (against gun lobby)	\$ 33

The chart shows that U.S. House members voting for the NRA position on HR 125 got, on average, \$4,450 from the NRA PAC and other pro-gun groups, during the 1995-96 period, while those voting against the Assault Weapon Ban Repeal got only \$33.

In the 1995-1996 election cycle, the NRA PAC gave about \$1.8 million in political donations in hard and soft money. It increased to \$2.2 million in the 1997-1998 cycle. North Carolina federal candidates who received NRA support in 1997-1998 are listed below.

**1997-98 Recipients of NRA PAC Money Among
N.C. Congressional Candidates**

Lauch Faircloth - Sen. (R)	\$13,900 + \$230,489 of Independent Exp.
Robin Hayes - House (R)	7,450 Won
Charles Taylor - House (R)	6,950 Won
Walter Jones Jr. - House (R)	6,000 Won
Dan Page - House (R)	4,900 Lost
Mike McIntyre - House (D)	3,500 Won
Linwood Mercer - House (D)	3,000 Lost
Richard Burr - House (R)	2,500 Won
Sue Myrick - House (R)	2,500 Won
Thomas Roberg - House (R)	2,000 Lost

Here is a summary of the NRA PAC spending for all Congressional candidates from North Carolina for the five elections in the 1990s:

NRA PAC Spending on N.C. Congressional Candidates

1989-90	\$ 9,950	1995-96	\$ 104,528
1991-92	52,950	1997-98	281,239
1993-94	66,000	Total 1989-98	\$ 514,667

Combining NRA PAC spending for state and federal elections in North Carolina yields the following table and bar chart:

NRA PAC SPENDING ON N.C. STATE AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

1989-90	\$ 16,250	1995-96	\$ 151,032
1991-92	71,529	1997-98	334,343
1993-94	102,777	Total 1989-98	\$ 675,931