



NAMES IN THE NEWS: THOMAS WRIGHT OF NORTH CAROLINA

AN ANALYSIS OF CAMPAIGN REPORTS, 2000-2006

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North Carolina State Rep. Thomas Wright (D-18) was sent to prison April 7 after being found guilty of fraud; another trial for alleged violation of campaign-finance law may be in his future.¹ Wright may have used the same account or accounts for personal and campaign funds and may not have reported some \$200,000 in contributions.² Wright continued to campaign while on trial and hopes to win re-election, despite having been expelled by the North Carolina House of Representatives on a vote of 109-5. Wright had been in office since 1992.³

The Institute reviewed campaign contributions reported by Wright to the North Carolina State Board of Elections from 2000 through 2006. During that time, Wright reported contributions of \$240,977 from more than 300 individuals and organizations, mostly from real estate and medical interests. The top 13 contributors accounted for nearly one-third of all Wright's contributions. The top single contributor to Wright over the years was the North Carolina Association of Realtors, which gave \$13,000. Jim Black, former North Carolina Speaker of the House now serving time in a federal penitentiary on corruption charges, was Wright's second largest contributor, with \$12,000 in personal and political committee contributions.

Most of Wright's money came from in-state contributors, who gave \$194,177, or 80 percent of Wright's total reported contributions in the years 2000 to 2006. Contributors from New York were the next largest group of givers, with \$11,850 in contributions. The largest contributor listing a New York address was the drug manufacturer Pfizer, which gave \$4,650 in the years 2000-2006.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO WRIGHT'S CAMPAIGN, 2000-2006

CONTRIBUTOR	TOTAL
North Carolina Association of Realtors	\$13,000
Former House Speaker Jim Black (committee and personal)	\$12,000
North Carolina Hospital Association	\$7,000
Wilmington Anesthesiologists	\$6,000
North Carolina Home Builders Association	\$5,500
North Carolina Medical Society	\$5,000
Pfizer	\$4,650
Glaxo SmithKline/Glaxo Wellcome	\$4,500
Nationwide Mutual Insurance	\$4,250
North Carolina Association of Nurse Anesthetists	\$4,250
Citizens for Higher Education	\$4,000
Southeastern Radiology Organization	\$4,000
TOTAL	\$74,150

¹ Vicky Eckenrode, "Wright Convicted, Sentenced to 6 to 8 Years in Prison," *StarNewsOnline.com*, April 8, 2008, available from <http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20080408/NEWS28/804080318/0/NEWS>, accessed April 8, 2008.

² "Thomas Wright Investigation Continues One Year Later," *WWAY News Channel 3*, Dec. 2, 2007, available from http://www.wwaytv3.com/thomas_wright_investigation_continues_one_year_later/12/2007, accessed April 8, 2008.

³ Thomas Wright, "Under the Dome Profiles," *The News and Observer*, available from http://projects.newsobserver.com/under_the_dome/profiles/thomas_wright, accessed April 8, 2008.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY YEAR

Wright raised an average of \$60,244 over the four elections, with a low of \$21,825 in 2002 and high of \$90,726 in 2006, considerably more cash than he raised in the three previous cycles. Redistricting took effect and changed the composition of Wright's district 18, effective for 2004 election.⁴

CONTRIBUTIONS TO WRIGHT'S CAMPAIGN BY ELECTION

ELECTION	TOTAL
2000	\$69,676
2002	\$21,825
2004	\$58,750
2006	\$90,726
TOTAL	\$240,977

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The nine top industries contributing to Wright accounted for \$119,026 or 49 percent of all contributions. Altogether, individuals and organizations related to health care kicked in \$79,175 to Wright's campaign efforts.

TOP INDUSTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO WRIGHT'S CAMPAIGN, 2000-2006

INDUSTRY	AMOUNT
Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Wholesalers	\$20,900
Real Estate Agents & Association	\$19,650
Democratic Candidates & Campaigns	\$18,800
Physicians & Medical Association	\$18,375
Nurse Anesthetists & Association	\$10,325
Long-Term Care Facilities	\$7,700
Lawyers	\$7,050
North Carolina Hospital Association	\$7,000
TOTAL	\$109,800

ANALYSIS OF MONEY RAISED IN 2006

Pharmaceutical manufacturers and wholesalers stepped up their support of Wright — who chaired the Health Committee — to the tune of \$11,500, or almost 13 percent of the money he raised in 2006. Those interests gave a total of \$10,520 in three previous cycles. The Nurse Anesthetists Association and individual certified registered nurse anesthetists contributed heavily to Wright's re-election effort for the first time in the 2006 cycle. Wright reported receiving \$10,075 or 11 percent of the total for 2006 from this group. The nurse anesthetists opposed HB 503, which Wright killed by the unusual means of failing to bring it to the floor for a vote after the Health

⁴ "Current District Plans," *North Carolina General Assembly*, available from http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Redistricting/District_Plans/Current_Plans.html, accessed April 9, 2008.

Committee passed it. Wright is also accused of failing to report additional contributions from this group.⁵

TOP INDUSTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO WRIGHT'S 2006 CAMPAIGN

INDUSTRY	TOTAL
Nurse Anesthetists & Association	\$10,075
Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Wholesalers	\$11,500
Real Estate Agents & Association	\$8,100
North Carolina Hospital Association	\$6,000
Long-Term Care Facilities	\$4,500
North Carolina Home Builders Association	\$4,000
Citizens for Education/University of North Carolina	\$4,000
TOTAL	\$48,175

⁵ Mark Schreiner, "More Allegations Against Wright Brought to Light," *StarNewsOnline.com*, May 23, 2007, available from http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20070523/NEWS/705230443-1/news38&title=More_allegations_against_Wright_brought_to_light, accessed April 9, 2008.