

Supporters: Bond vote crucial

By JOHN WANLESS
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As contentious as some issues are during this political season, there is, perhaps, one area that most agree on: the priority of higher education and the financial support it needs.

North Carolina voters will have an opportunity to vote Nov. 7 for a \$3.1 billion bond referendum that has been relatively kept away from the political fray this season and has few, if any, detractors. The vote asks if state residents want to provide funding for facility needs on all 16 campuses of the University of North Carolina and the 59 campuses of the North Carolina Community College System.

The North Carolina General Assembly unanimously approved the placement of this issue on the ballot for the upcoming election. Republicans and Democrats have overwhelmingly supported this referendum. Both Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) have urged support.

Four North Carolina governors – Jim Hunt joined by former state governors Jim Martin, Jim Holshouser and Bob Scott – issued a joint statement of support Monday for the bonds.

They said the community colleges and universities are “running out of space” and that North Carolina’s future depends on its people having the opportunity to receive the education and training necessary to compete in the new technological society.

“Only the Higher Education Bonds will ensure that North Carolina doesn’t fall behind,” the statement read.

It continued, “Of all the issues we have addressed over the past three decades, the Higher Education Bond is an investment in our state that has the greatest potential to move our state forward, to benefit more people in more ways.”

Again, detractors don’t seem to

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be evident. Dan Kuehnert, Burke County Republican chairman, said Monday that his party, which has a history of opposing bond measures, has taken no stand on the higher education bond referendum. And along with the General Assembly’s support, Kuehnert said, the referendum seems to have the support of Congressional Republicans, as well.

Cynthia Hagaman Callaway, vice president for institutional advancement for Western Piedmont Community College, said the college’s total formula allotment is \$5,344,923. “Of this figure, approximately \$1.5 million is reserved for use for needed repairs and renovations of existing college facilities.”

She said the remaining funds, which require a 69 percent county match, may be used for new construction or additional repairs and renovations as needed.

Callaway said the priority for these funds would include “the construction of an Allied Health/Early Childhood Development and Education Center to house the College’s Allied Health programs and to serve as a day-care center for WPCC student-parents in the community.”

Also the college plans for the construction of a facility for engineering sciences and technology. Callaway said this project will help “to prepare workers to enter high

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Here is the exact wording of the Higher Education Improvement Bond as it appears on state ballots:

The Issuance of the State of North Carolina Higher Education Improvement Bonds, constituting general obligation bonds of the State secured by a pledge of the faith and credit and taxing power of the State for the purpose of providing funds, with any other available funds, to pay all or part of the cost of (I) renovating laboratories, classrooms, academic buildings, and worker training facilities and providing other capital improvements at the 59 institutions of the North Carolina College System in order to fulfill the mission of educating students and providing worker training essential to the North Carolina economy, and to address expected large increases in student enrollment, and (II) renovating and replacing classrooms, laboratories, and academic buildings and providing other capital improvements at the 16 campuses of the constituent institutions, the affiliated institutions, and the Center for Public Television (UNC-TV) of the University of North Carolina System in order to meet large expected student enrollment increases, serve North Carolina by providing the education critical to the State’s economy, and to continue to provide UNC-TV public television to the State’s viewers; in the amount of three billion one hundred million dollars (\$3, 100,000,000).

Voters will be asked to vote FOR or AGAINST.

technology, high wage industries such as computer, electrical, and industrial engineering.”