November 1996

The Transformation of Gubernatorial Power and Privilege in South Carolina

Fred L. Carter

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/jops

Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/jops/vol24/iss1/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Politics at CCU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Political Science by an authorized editor of CCU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact commons@coastal.edu.
Few institutions in American government have undergone the abrupt transformation in power and privilege as that realized by the South Carolina governor over the past decade and a half. Still fewer institutions began their transformation from such a relative position of constitutional and statutory inadequacy. Viewed historically as one of the weakest among the chief executives of the 50 states, the office was described by V.O. Key in his seminal book *Southern Politics in the State and Nation* as having the "narrowest sort of power of decision of State Administration."

Other, more recent, studies comparing the formal powers of state governors have consistently affirmed the structural frailties inherent in the South Carolina executive. These studies have identified weak appointment powers, the absence of an executive budget, and the inability to organize and reorganize as factors which have traditionally curtailed gubernatorial authority and prerogative.

Beginning in the early 1980s, executive governance began an ascendency to a more visible, recognizable position within the hierarchy of state politics. This movement and the events, expectations, and cultural manifestations which have accompanied it have led to the realization of a dynamic model of gubernatorial centrality and control in contemporary South Carolina. The resulting impact on the development of substantive policy has been profound, with the governor becoming increasingly influential on both ends of the policy continuum—initiation and implementation.

An analysis of this transformation provides a view of a rapidly changing state institution and permits the assessment of shifting legislative-executive branch authority across a single generation. Just as importantly, it affords the opportunity to observe patterns of institutional control and accountability emerge in response to a variety
of political, economic and social pressures.

This article will examine these issues and attempt to identify causal trends which have bolstered the posture of the executive during the last few years. To facilitate the latter, the typologies of political culture developed by Daniel Elazar will be employed to explain the emerging patterns of gubernatorial authority.°

1790-1980: The Symbolic and Hollow Executive

Historically, South Carolinians have abhorred executive authority. As early as 1790, the first constitution of the state provided for the legislature to elect the governor, who was restricted to serving a two year term and who lacked the authority to control or check legislative power. In 1865 the popular election of governor was permitted and allowance was made for a gubernatorial veto, although the veto could be overridden by a majority vote in both houses of the legislature. More expansively, the 1865 constitution made allowance for the governor to initiate proposals for laws and it required other executive officials to submit information to him upon request.

The slow and gradual realization of the most symbolic executive authority occurred with the passage of the current (1895) Constitution. This constitution provided for a true separation of the executive and legislative branches and required direct popular election of the governor. Uncharacteristic of other southern states, the document did make allowance for a line item veto. Characteristic of such states, it provided for the "long ballot" election of a myriad of constitutional officers with whom the governor would share executive authority." While the governor was afforded a "chief executive" primacy in the document, the other officers were assured autonomy from gubernatorial control in their direct relationship to the electorate and the legislature.

This subjugation of executive authority was both circumspectly and artfully constructed. At a time when the majority of other states and the federal government were moving toward executive centrality°, South Carolina grudgingly allowed for a separate executive branch with limited checks over the legislature and power diffused among the nine elected executive officials.
This is not to imply that South Carolina was without rebellious governors during this time period. The campaign of 1890 between "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman and Alexander C. Haskell was extraordinarily volatile with the subsequent victor, Tillman, pledging a platform of reforms. Tillman biographer Francis Butler Simkins summarized many of these as detailed in Tillman’s inaugural address in December, 1890:

Numerous other reforms were advocated. A commission should be appointed to examine the management of the lunatic asylum. The state penitentiary should be self-supporting and, to further this end, restrictions on the hiring out of convicts should be loosened without surrendering state regulation of this labor. He repeated old demands for a constitutional convention, the reapportionment of seats in the legislature, the abolition of one of Charleston’s two seats in the Senate, and the establishment of a uniform control of the administration of local justice. He declared that the assessment of taxes by popularly elected officials was ‘an absolute and pitiable failure’ and recommended centralization of this function....

But Simkins noted that his subsequent record of “educational, constitutional, and administrative reform (was) so moderate that conservative traditions were scarcely violated.” Legislative supremacy was never seriously challenged.

The movement into the twentieth century resulted in few changes. When the wave of budget reform swept across the Federal and state governments between 1910 and 1925, South Carolina’s response was measured and moderate. The U.S. Congress, in the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, provided for the creation of an executive budget with all budgetary requests centralized through the president. Many state governments adopted similar plans with governors controlling the budget submission process. As the ability to recommend appropriations is an essential requisite to the ability to propose meaningful legislation, these efforts enhanced the chief executive’s role.
both in controlling agencies and in directing the flow of their policy.

The South Carolina General Assembly, while recognizing the virtues of consolidating the budget proposal process, was not willing to escalate the governor’s profile as an agent for affecting budget or policy recommendations. The 1919 compromise provided for the creation of a Budget Commission with a membership of three: the governor, who served as chairman, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. Ostensibly, this measure provided a deliberative forum for the three primary budget actors in the state to discuss and propose fiscal policy. Practically, it ensured that the two legislative members would always control the process.

By mid-century, the powers of this Commission, with the governor in the minority, were substantial and included post as well as pre-appropriation controls:

An examination of the minutes (State Budget Commission, Minutes) of the last several years of the existence of this Commission indicates that it exercised extraordinary control over state finances. It prepared the state budget, approved or disapproved all transfers, set individual state employee salaries, approved major equipment acquisitions, allocated a significant amount of money out of the civil contingent fund for agency expenditures, and had to approve all expenditures by agencies that were even the slightest bit out of the ordinary.  

Thus by 1948 what began as an initiative to permit the governor, as one member of three, limited prerogative to propose budgets had evolved into a mechanism to provide the General Assembly, as two members of three, control of much of the financial operations of executive branch agencies, including the governor’s own office. The imbalance of power became more pronounced.

In 1950, the State Reorganization Commission proposed a new budget organization plan to the General Assembly. This plan provided for the consolidation of eight state agencies under the old Budget
Transformation of Gubernatorial Power & Privilege

Commission and the addition of two new members, the Treasurer and the Comptroller General, to the body itself. This new construct, renamed the State Budget and Control Board, was created statutorily the same year. Once again, an action taken to affect presumably progressive change had resulted in a further diminution of the governor’s authority. While the new Budget and Control Board was comprised of a membership with the executive in the majority, the governor now could cast only one vote of five. Moreover, the other two executive members were in no way accountable to the governor and were, in fact, dependent upon the legislature for appropriations to maintain their own offices.

Governors were realizing no more success in exerting control over executive branch operations during this same period. In a highly publicized event in the 1930s, Governor Olin D. Johnston, depicted by a lowcountry politician as “a young squirt from Spartanburg with a labor background” declared a state of rebellion, suspended habeas corpus and called out the National Guard in an effort to force the State Highway Commission to comply with his edicts. Decades later, Governors Robert McNair and John West would work diligently to implement desegregation in the state educational systems while relying more on persuasion and the symbolic prestige of the executive rather than true constitutional or statutory authority.

When James B. Edwards was inaugurated in 1975, he had direct control over the appointment of only two state agency heads: the Chief of the State Law Enforcement Division and the Commissioner of Labor. The other 168 agency directors and 32 university, college and technical college presidents were appointed by and accountable to independent boards and commissions. Although the governor at that time appointed approximately 1,400 state and regional board and commission officials, most served fixed terms varying from two to six years. But even if a governor had all appointments affected, he would control the governing boards of fewer than a dozen agencies. Moreover, because the preponderance of members served fixed terms with removal only for cause, there were no immediate sanctions for defying a gubernatorial edict.

Beyond appointments and budgets, the greatest constraint on executive authority was the constitutional provision that governors could
serve a single four year term. Such a restriction was daunting enough given the fact that the first year of the term was devoted largely to organizational efforts and during the last year the office was relegated generally to “lame duck” status. Governors were left with only the interim two years to conceptualize, propose, mobilize a viable coalition, implement, and evaluate. It is not surprising that governors controlled little of the policy process and championed few programmatic initiatives. As a lot, their proposals were regarded skeptically by their legislative brethren, and frequently they were forced to rely on demagoguery to gain any measure of popular support.

As a consequence, the position was considered generally to be a stepping stone to higher office, most notably the U.S. Senate. V.O. Key described the situation as it pertained to then Governor Strom Thurmond:

...The institutional structure almost perforce casts the governor in the role of popular leadership and drives the legislature to a role as defender of the status quo. When the governor is independent, ambitious, and aggressive, he has a head-on collision with the legislature. And, says a senator, governors propose ambitious programs, not out of any sincere regard for the needs of the people, but as a means to higher office. That behavior points to the principle that mass welfare can often, and perhaps only, be advanced by harnessing to it forces seeking private or personal advantage. Governor Thurmond, a senator opined in early 1948, “is one of those who is trying to build himself up for the Senate and he is full of a program of his own and full of things he wants to do, and we just naturally come into conflict.”

While such criticism seems harsh, a biographical survey of South Carolina governors during the twentieth century reveals that no fewer than six were elected subsequently to the U.S. Senate. This datum is even more striking when one considers that the two seats have been occupied continuously since 1956 and 1966 by Strom Thurmond and
Transformation of Gubernatorial Power & Privilege

Ernest Hollings, respectively. Table One identifies the six governors with their gubernatorial and senatorial terms noted.

With the movement into the latter part of the twentieth century, the position remained somnambulant both politically and administratively. As to governance potential, it continued to function more effectively "as a platform for generating public expectations than as an instrument for satisfying such expectations." 14

1980-Present: The Evolving Executive

The 1970s became embryonic years for the growth of the governor's authority. During the administrations of Robert McNair (1965-71) and John West (1971-75) the governor's office was expanded substantially as federal funds flowed into the state. Much of the federal enabling legislation required the governor to be the state trustee for various grant programs, thereby providing him the opportunity to affect a broader range of financial decisions. McNair created a Division of Planning and Grants to work with legislators and local government officials in determining eligibility for grants and making application. West structured a Division of Administration through which many of these grants were administered. For the first time, governors had administrative responsibility for processes beyond their own anteroom.

James B. Edwards (1975-79), as the first Republican inaugurated since Reconstruction, learned quickly the importance of developing and selling a nonpartisan agenda in order to mollify the Democrat-controlled legislature. Relying on such support, Edwards sought to overhaul the social services bureaucracy and construct a corporate management structure for the Budget and Control Board.

But the next three administrations truly saw the emergence of the authoritative executive. Richard Riley (1979-87), a progressive reformist, avidly sought a forum for redefining executive power. He employed his staff in this quest, and they were frequently to be found in the legislative chambers, lobbying for the Governor's programs. Riley was also successful in generating support for a constitutional amendment to permit reelection for a second four year term. This constitutional change, coupled with Riley's reelection in 1982,
**Table One:**

**Twentieth Century South Carolina Governors**

Subsequently Serving in the U.S. Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governor</th>
<th>Term as Governor</th>
<th>Term in the U.S. Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coleman L. Blease</td>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>1925-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnet R. Maybank</td>
<td>1939-41</td>
<td>1941-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Strom Thurmond</td>
<td>1947-51</td>
<td>1954-56; 1956-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest F. Hollings</td>
<td>1959-63</td>
<td>1966-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald S. Russell</td>
<td>1963-65</td>
<td>1965-66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 One governor, James F. Byrnes, served in the U.S. Senate from 1931-41 prior to his gubernatorial term from 1951-1955.

2 Strom Thurmond resigned from the Senate in April, 1956 and was reelected in November, 1956.
Transformation of Gubernatorial Power & Privilege
effectively redefined the power base for the modern governor. No longer was he simply a personality to be tolerated for four short years; eight years were long enough to propose and implement programs. Moreover, the campaign for reelection could be used to secure an electoral mandate for a political agenda. Finally, tenure across two terms was sufficient to give a governor control over all of the appointments to which he was entitled, even those involving fixed, staggered terms.

Riley proceeded to realize these expectations in his successful bid to have the Education Improvement Act passed in 1984. What is commonly appreciated as his most significant legislative accomplishment could never have been achieved within the scope of a single term. Sufficient time would not have existed to align the right forces politically, mobilize extensive public support, and negotiate enough compromises legislatively to ensure a winning coalition.

The two terms of Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. (1987-95) expanded gubernatorial authority even further. Campbell, an intelligent, aggressive Greenville Republican, had served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives on the prestigious Ways and Means Committee. He knew national politics, he possessed a keen sense for bargaining legislatively, and he was not reticent to use partisan politics to the advantage of his governorship.

In the first term, Campbell carefully but consistently pursued opportunities to promote gubernatorial power and prestige. Economic development initiatives became his forte, and he developed strong rapport with the business leadership of the state. This alliance was sustained with every major initiative he brought forth over the eight years.

Campbell also moved to establish more ownership of the budgetary process. Lacking statutory authority, he nevertheless sent his own executive budget to the Budget and Control Board and the legislature in 1988. This process continued for each of the following four years. Finally, in 1993, the budgetary statutes were revised to allow the governor the authority to solicit agency requests and submit an executive budget, annotating his priorities.

Beyond design, however, circumstances also conspired to enhance the gubernatorial base of authority. Hurricane Hugo ravaged the state
in September, 1989, and the focal point of response and recovery became the governor's office. Campbell negotiated a substantially reduced state match for federal disaster assistance with the Bush administration and appointed a blue ribbon recovery commission with two former governors as members. Concurrently, he rejected pleas to convene a special legislative session. The implication was obvious: the crisis required immediate executive action not legislative deliberation. Surprisingly, the legislative leadership concurred with his decision and ultimately vindicated the means. Within a year, South Carolina had substantially recovered from a natural catastrophe exceeding $7 billion in damages.

An even heavier pall descended upon the state in 1990 when a federal sting operation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated legislative vote buying, violations of the Hobbes Act and other state corruption. When the indictments were returned, 28 state officials and lobbyists were implicated. All but one were subsequently found guilty or pleaded guilty.15

Two events transpired in the aftermath. The first involved extensive legislative dialogue on the necessity for strengthening the state's ethics laws. This culminated in the passage of one of the strictest ethics laws among the 50 states in September, 1991. Much of the regulatory focus in the legislation centered upon the legislator-lobbyist relationship.

The second event had more profound implications for executive authority and consolidation. Carroll Campbell in his 1991 state of the state address demanded a restructuring of state government "ripped open by scandal." Within a month, he had signed an executive order creating the Commission on Governmental Restructuring, cochaired by Lt. Governor Nick Theodore and House Judiciary Chairman David Wilkins. This commission met for six months, conducted extensive hearings and in September, 1991 recommended a 15 department cabinet appointed by the governor. Concurrently, the State newspaper launched a series entitled "power failure" which would run into 1992 and chronicle many of the dysfunctions of state government.

In 1992, the General Assembly began considering the reform package in earnest. In the House of Representatives, restructuring deadlocked and Speaker Bob Sheheen cast the deciding vote for its
adoption. The Senate was even more equivocal. Its leadership consistently implored Campbell to compromise on various aspects of the commission proposal, which he refused to do. Finally, in the waning hours of the session, the plan died on a procedural technicality without ever coming to a vote.

Restructuring proponents began again the following year with an altered plan and a new strategy. This new plan called for the consolidation of 170 state agencies into 69, ten of which would be cabinet agencies immediately, with three more to be added over the next two years. Notably, the governor’s authority to appoint and remove the cabinet agency directors was absolute and his authority to appoint and remove the board/commission membership for the noncabinet agencies was expanded substantially.

Strategically the House leadership, with the support of the Governor, decided to link the restructuring statutes and the appropriations bill. While restructuring would be addressed in separate legislation, the appropriations bill also would be drafted to reflect the restructured entities. Should the former fail, the latter would necessarily prevail, if there was to be a budget at all. The strategy proved successful and on June 18, 1993, the bill was signed into law. Campbell had little time during his final term to accomplish more than the realignment of the restructured entities, but his successor, David M. Beasley (1995-present) would wield cabinet government as an authoritative instrument of gubernatorial control.

Beasley, a young attorney and banker from the Pee Dee area, had previously served as the Speaker pro tempore in the S.C. House of Representatives. He was supported in his election bid by Campbell’s political organization, the Christian Coalition, and the majority of the business establishment within the state. From the inaugural address through the first 18 months in office, his administration appeared committed to two imperatives: expanding the economic vitality and growth of the state and realizing a larger role in the governance process.

His approach to cabinet governance has been most evidently reflected in three areas: appointments, the development of “subcabinets”, and the coordination of cabinet agency functions through the governor’s staff. All three underscore the primacy of accountability

Volume 24, 1996 \ 193
and control, but they also highlight some of the difficulties attendant to moving a cumbersome bureaucracy in a coordinated and purposeful direction.

The appointment of the Beasley administration cabinet was a studious process. All prospective candidates for director and deputy director positions were extensively screened, and for at least two cabinet posts, extensive national searches were conducted. The finalists were subjected to an extensive series of interviews with the governor’s staff, selected external substantive area experts and ultimately with the Governor himself. Such a process appears routine given the conventional norms of business and government. In South Carolina, however, the route to an agency directorship had customarily required tenacity and seniority, and these selection standards were extraordinary in their thoroughness.

The development of the subcabinet concept was even more unconventional. Not content with simply structuring cabinet meeting and processes, Beasley immediately installed a series of analytical teams formed around substantive policy area groupings within the cabinet. The intention was to coordinate public policy and programs with similar missions and goals, irrespective of where they might institutionally reside. A residual benefit of the subcabinet approach has been the reduction of intra-cabinet rivalry and an increased understanding of shared responsibility across agency boundaries.

Finally, the administration’s consolidation and coordination of cabinet agency lobbying and public affairs through the governor’s staff has essentially solidified control in two vital areas—legislative and press relations. The governor’s own staff crafts the message for these sensitive constituencies, and they ensure that the information is both consistent and palatable politically.

These changes, and many more modest ones which extend from those articulated above, have revitalized the role of the governor in South Carolina. Table Two provides a pre- and post-transformation analysis of the more substantial gubernatorial authorities and powers. Beyond the events described above, however, there are other, more intrinsic reasons for these changes in the role of the South Carolina chief executive. One of the more compelling explanations may reside with the shifting trends in the political culture of the state itself.
### Transformation of Gubernatorial Power & Privilege

Table Two

Gubernatorial Authorities and Powers:
Pre- and Post-Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority/Power(Year)</th>
<th>Pre-Transformation</th>
<th>Post Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment (1993)</td>
<td>Approx. 1,500 state and regional appts; controlled 12 agencies indirectly through lay boards</td>
<td>Approx. 1,500 state and reg. appts.; appoints the directors of 13 cabinet agencies; controls another 8 agencies through lay boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal (1993)</td>
<td>Limited removal of board appts. for cause</td>
<td>All appointees, except regulatory commissioners, serve at the pleasure of the governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (1981)</td>
<td>A single four year term; ineligible for reelection to a consecutive term</td>
<td>Eligible for reelection to a second consecutive term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget authority (1993)</td>
<td>Proposed budget as chairman of 5 person Budget and Control Bd.</td>
<td>Statutory authority to submit executive budget proposal for all agencies, cabinet and noncabinet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Volume 24, 1996 \ 195
Mired in the Traditionalistic Culture

The model of the impotent executive which dominated in the state for the first two centuries probably evolved from any number of antecedents: the colonial fear of the king’s tyranny, the legislature’s regard for a stronger executive as a zero sum game power proposition, perhaps even concerns over mirroring a Federal presidential role. Whatever the reasons and imagined provocations, two centuries of a powerless executive served to institutionalize and even venerate the legislative state. By the first half of the twentieth century, South Carolina’s governor was not only a hollow vestige of authority, but the office has been rendered a cultural relic.

In *American Federalism*, Daniel J. Elazar argues that there are three major types of American political culture: traditionalistic, individualistic, and moralistic. Each culture emanates from a variety of ethnic, religious, political and sociological dispositions and expectations of a populace and may vary according to geographic section and region.

The traditionalistic culture is distinctly Southern in origin. This culture involves a citizenry, generally depicted as undereducated and lacking in initiative, deferring to a elitist social hierarchy. Governmental structures are paternalistic, and enormous emphasis is placed on preserving the status quo. Political processes are not overtly competitive in that the hierarchy, both social and political, is entrenched and well defined with seniority being the definitive factor in determining political ascendency.

The individualistic culture derives from the mid-Atlantic states and views politics and political processes as market commodities. Political values and resources are accepted or rejected according to their merit and viability. Thus ideas, including strategies for change, may be “bought, sold, or traded” according to their competitive appeal. The individualistic culture places a high premium upon political options and policy choice. Of course, implicit in this reasoning is an informed and responsible electorate.

The third political culture, the moralistic, stems from a New England orientation. This culture encompasses attitudes and opinions predicated upon a sense of civic responsibility or common good. It is
inherently moralistic in that it ascribes "higher value" reasoning to political participation. Somewhat tautologically, increased participation in the political process serves to spread this sense of civic responsibility and is most desirous.

Elazar's traditionalistic culture merits examination regarding its ability to explain South Carolina's historic legislative-executive imbalance. Most assuredly, the true bastion of state power, the General Assembly, had been a rigidly structured political and social hierarchy with service longevity being the imperative for promotion.

With regard to the paternalistic attributes of legislative rule, V.O. Key described the role of the legislature, particularly the Senate, in the "natural" order of the state:

Such is the formal allocation of governmental powers in South Carolina: a weak executive, a legislature that takes a hand in the management of administrative departments, and a legislature whose county delegations, with the senator a kingpin, in effect, govern their respective counties. And within the state the position of the legislature is accorded due recognition. To a higher degree than elsewhere in the South, public attention—as measured by newspaper coverage and by observation of the attitudes of politicians over the region—is focused on the legislature, where, as between the two houses, the senate holds primacy. And the senate regards itself as something of a gentleman's club, not without reason for South Carolina senators are a cut—a broad cut—above above the usual run of state legislators.17

The governor, in spite of the deference afforded him in the ceremonial exercise of his office, was not a member of the legislative cabal and was entitled to only a modicum of true power. Moreover, the General Assembly was far too attentive to legislative business to concern itself with the chief executive. Speaker Emeritus Sol Blatt in a revealing interview in 1982 acknowledged that in 50 years of state service, he had only visited the governor's office six times when he
Luther F. Carter

was not invited. Most commonly, what attention the governor was afforded was addressed to “that fellow downstairs” in floor debate. Nor could the governor capitalize on partisan politics. Because state politics were effectively one party Democrat politics until well into the 1970’s, governors lacked the platform and the audience naturally provided through partisan sparring. Ferrol Sams, Jr. retells a joke from the pre-World War II era which illustrates the political solidarity and intolerance in the Deep South at that time. It involves a rural school teacher leading her students through tutorial exercises:

“Children, who paved the road in front of your house?”
In response, the chorus, “Roosevelt!”
“Who put electricity in your house for you?”
“Roosevelt!”
Who gave your uncle a job in the WPA?”
“Roosevelt!”
Who got your grand daddy an old age pension?”
“Roosevelt!”
“All right, children. Now. Who made you?”
After a moment of silence one little boy asserted stoutly, “God.”
Whereupon a gallused, barefoot towhead leaped up in the back row and yelled, “Throw that sorry Republican out of here.”

Clearly, the pre-transformation model of executive authority in South Carolina was an artifact of a traditionalistic culture. The legislature was the paternalistic influence, and there was little tolerance, or need, for a competing force. Political processes were simple, and politics were pursued according to a set of well understood rules, the majority of which were embedded in legislative ritual and the seniority system.

Attempting to explain the post-transformation model is more problematic. For the first two centuries, it is reasonable to argue that paternalistic politics were a function of static norms and a traditional culture. However, any effort to explain political change, be it of
process or culture or both, should necessarily involve an ordering of the causality. In this effort, the explanation becomes more tenuous.

Most assuredly, the past 15 years have seen the emergence of the individualistic and moralistic cultures in South Carolina politics. And clearly the executive institution has served as both a catalyst and a symbol for perpetuating these cultures in competition with the traditionalistic culture. What is uncertain is the extent to which governors have effectively opened processes to affect a marketplace of competing ideologies and ideas (individualistic) and forced a more expansive definition of the common good (moralistic). Or rather have these cultures developed independently through the gradual political maturation of a populace with the chief executive as the principal beneficiary?

More anecdotal support exists for the first view: that post-1980 governors have challenged the traditionalistic culture and provided the other competing cultures a responsive forum. Should this be the case, the power debate will be enjoined well into the next decade. As future governors proselytize for more sympathetic and progressive cultures, they will continue to campaign against the political orthodoxy which built and sustained one of the last, great legislative states.

Luther F. Carter, is on leave from the University of Charleston and is serving as Executive Director of the South Carolina Budget and Control Board


4. The Constitution of 1865 provided for the popular election of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the Treasurer, the Comptroller General, the Attorney General, the Adjutant General, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the Superintendent of Education.

5. The passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883 and the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887 served to centralize and strengthen executive authority in the Federal government. In sum, this was a period for realizing administrative and political reform and much of this reform was predicated upon achieving stronger presidential (gubernatorial) control.


Transformation of Gubernatorial Power & Privilege


11. For a thorough discussion of the various patterns of appointments to governing boards and commissions, see Carter and Grose in Government in the Palmetto State, p 91.

12. While the Constitution of 1895 extended a governor’s term from two to four years, it prohibited his succession to a consecutive term.


15. Six of this convictions were overturned upon appeal. Presently, these cases are awaiting new trials.


17. Key, Southern Politics in the State and Nation, p. 152.


19. The senate and house chambers are on the second floor of the statehouse; the governor’s offices are on the first floor. Of course, since the terms “governor” and “devil” were frequently synonymous, it was often unclear as to which “fellow” a legislator was referring.