

Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform

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Craven County August, 2000

The Policy Context

General Information Craven County is located in eastern North Carolina, at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers, some 100 miles east of Raleigh. The county population is nearly 90,000. The major municipalities in the county are New Bern and Havelock (populations approximately 25,000), although all of these population statistics overstate the case since they include the Marine Air Station at Cherry Point as part of the county population.⁰ The population of the county is some 68% white, 28% African-American, and 2% Latino, with the remaining 2% being of other ethnicities, although these 1990 Census figures understate the recent large influx of Latinos moving into eastern North Carolina.

Economy The single largest employer in Craven County is the US Navy, employing some 4,000 people at the Cherry Point Naval Aviation Depot (NADEP). The major private-sector manufacturing employers in Craven County are Moen, Inc. (plumbing fixtures), employing some 1,000 people, Hatteras Yachts (boat-building), employing some 800 people, Weyerhaeuser (paper products), employing some 530 people, and Maola Dairies (milk products), employing some 500 people. Employment statistics gathered in 1996 show that some 35% of the county workforce of approximately 35,000 people work for the government (federal, state, local), 22% are in retail, 19.5% in services, 13% in manufacturing, with construction, finance, transportation, and agriculture each accounting for less than 5% of the workforce.

Tourism has long played an important role in Craven County's economy. The county is the gateway to the beaches at Emerald Isle, Atlantic Beach, Cedar Island, and Harkers Island and

to the tourist destinations of Morehead City and Beaufort. New Bern, the first capital of North Carolina, is the home of the restored colonial Governor's Mansion at Tryon Palace, originally built in 1770. New Bern has recently completed a Convention Center alongside the waterfront Sheraton Grand Hotel, a centerpiece of downtown revitalization efforts. A large marina is located next to the Sheraton Grand Hotel, making the hotel easily accessible to boaters, especially those traveling the intra-coastal waterway.

Demographics As part of eastern North Carolina, Craven County is dominated by what Elazar would call a traditionalistic political culture. Much of the history of politics in the county has been an effort by paternalistic white middle and upper class officials to keep working class African Americans from gaining and exercising political power. Many of the historical political battles in the county can be understood in terms of racial politics. In the 1980s and 1990s, this began to change as large numbers of retirees from other regions (in particular, the Northeast and Midwest) began to settle in Craven County to enjoy its proximity to the ocean, its relatively low cost of living, and low tax rates. Many of these retirees are former US Marines, retiring after 30 years of active duty; they thus tend to be somewhat younger than traditional retirees. In the time period from July, 1990 to July, 1999, the percentage of those over the age of 65 in Craven County went from 12.2% to 14.0% while for the state of North Carolina, the percentage went from 12.2% to 12.5% (US Census estimates). The influx of retirees into Craven County has changed the political culture of the county which has had impacts on county politics.

Economy Craven is one of the wealthier counties in eastern North Carolina. Its 1999 median family income of \$40,100 puts it fourth of the thirteen Global TransPark counties and 21st of the 100 counties in the state. In terms of per capita income, Craven ranks 7th of the Global TransPark counties with a 1997 per capita income of \$20,747. The county's median family income is above the state average of \$38,823 and its per capita income is also above the state average of \$20,216. The county has a poverty rate of 13.6% which is the 42nd lowest of all counties in the state. The county also has a fairly large food stamp population—8.2% of county population in the first half of

1998—or the 56th lowest rate of all counties in the state.

Political Background Craven County commissioners are elected to four year terms, using a mixed electoral system with two commissioners elected from districts and five commissioners nominated by district but elected at-large. In the 1980s, the US Justice Department put pressure on counties like Craven to move from a Board of Commissioners elected completely at-large to a system that used at least some district-based elections. By applying provisions of the Voting Rights Act, the Justice Department refused to approve annexations, changes in electoral districts and methods of elections, etc. unless Craven County moved toward district-based elections. After the county moved to a mixed system, the first African-American commissioners since Reconstruction were elected to the Board of Commissioners in the late 1980s. In 1990, county voters elected a commission composed of a majority of Democrats, the same as it had since the 1860s.. Four years later, the 1994 Republican revolution which swept over North Carolina had a major impact on Craven County—the Board of Commissioners changed over from a Democratic majority to a Republican majority (four Republicans, three Democrats) for the first time since post-Civil War days. The four Republicans were white, two of the three Democrats were African-American; these were also the two commissioners elected from districts. In 1997, the lone white Democrat on the commission changed parties and became a Republican. The Board of Commissioners remained majority Republican until 1998 when the Democrats took control of the commission again.

According to those we interviewed, the electing county issue, in particular, and Work First, in general played virtually no role in the 1998 Craven County Board of Commissioners election. The County DSS Board Chair, who is also the Chair of the County Republican Party, mentioned that, in his view, the strong reaction to the abortive impeachment of President Clinton colored even local elections in 1998 and the turnover of the county commission from Republican to Democratic Party majority most likely was the result of national rather than local issues. The county manager mentioned that he thought that welfare reform might have been one of several

local issues that could have influenced county residents' votes but that his view was that the efforts of the Craven County Board of Commissioners to elect would probably be supported by a majority of the county if not a majority of the electorate in the county.

The other partisan change that occurred in the county was the election of a Republican—John Nichols—as the state representative for the Craven County area in 1992. Representative Nichols—a member of the state House Welfare Reform Subcommittee—played an instrumental role in influencing the Craven County Board of Commissioners to seek to become an electing county.

Time Frame—Highlights

Decision to Become an Electing County On September, 15 and 29, 1997 the Craven County Commission took up the issue of whether to try to pursue electing county status under the option offered to it by the North Carolina General Assembly. The Commission met on both occasions with the Craven County Social Services Board and conducted a public hearing on the topic. Michael Gorman, Vice-Chair of the Social Services Board (now Chair) commented that it would be a mistake for Craven County not to try to become an electing county. In early October, the County Commission voted by a margin of 6-1 (all five Republicans and one Democrat voting for the motion—the sole opponent was Commissioner Johnny Sampson) to pursue electing status. Throughout the late fall, 1997 the then County Director of Social Services (DSS Director) worked with members of the county commission and others to develop a new plan. A Work First Planning Committee was appointed by the commission to develop Craven County's plan and the plan was submitted to the county commission in late 1997. According to the 1997 chair of the county commission, this committee was composed of more than 30 people representing social services, county commissioners, churches, chambers of commerce, industry, and other organizations and agencies. In his view, the effort was not conceived to be a money saver for the county. Indeed, there was a consensus that if money was saved through the effort to become an electing county, the savings would be ploughed back into social services to assist clients.

In early 1998, the state returned Craven County's plan with several comments. First, the Craven County plan called for mandatory drug testing of cash assistance recipients which the state of North Carolina would not allow. Second, and more seriously, the Craven County plan called for a 15% reduction in cash payments rather than a 15% reduction in case loads as mandated in the first goal of the Work First program. The state wanted assurances from Craven County that the 15% reduction in cash payments would actually result in a reduction in case loads. In a March 9, 1998 special session of the Craven County Board of Commissioners, the Commission voted by a 6-1 majority to support the 15% reduction in cash payments. The minutes of that meeting show that the Commission felt it was "quite likely" that the 15% reduction in cash payments *would* actually result in at least a 15% reduction in case loads. After voting to support what was called Option #2 (the cash assistance reduction), the commission then voted by a 6-1 margin to adopt the Work First Planning Committee's clarifying language to the original plan the county developed and to submit the plan to the state for further consideration.

The actual plan developed in Craven County was a mix of tough measures and incentives for recipients to abide by the provisions of the plan. The plan called for all families to receive the same level of benefits (\$220 per month), regardless of how many children they had. Recipients would also receive an additional \$50 per month if they abided by the rules of the program. In an interview with the *Raleigh News and Observer* (February 2, 1998), the then County DSS Director said that the county commissioners believed that welfare recipients should face the same realities as working families do and that "[e]mployers don't pay you based on the number of children you have." In addition, the county plan created a jobs training center that would teach welfare recipients relevant job and life-oriented skills (bill paying, checkbook balancing, etc.) and they also developed funds for one-time help with such things as car payments and housing costs for those moving from the welfare rolls to employment.

The Craven County plan was forwarded to the state of North Carolina and became one of the plans that was recommended to the General Assembly for implementation. In fact, the plan

received the second highest ranking of any of the plans submitted by electing counties. County officials thought that this was tantamount to selection as an electing county. However, in the fall of 1998, the General Assembly decided to conduct a lottery to choose the actual electing counties and Craven County was not one of the counties chosen for electing status in this lottery.

There was some bitterness expressed by various interviewees over the decision by the General Assembly to use the lottery in choosing who might actually become an electing county. This bitterness was directed particularly at what was thought to be the political influence that was used since one powerful member of the General Assembly's county's plan did not rank very highly and so was not scheduled to be included among the electing counties.

Virtually all of the actors interviewed expressed the belief, however, that Craven County might have lost the battle but it may have won the war, since some of the innovative parts of the county plan actually became part of the state standard plan. Part of the reason for this may be that the then County DSS Director left Craven County in late 1998 to become the state DSS Director and so had a large role in determining what the state standard Work First plan would be.

In interviews conducted in 1998, the then County DSS Director told us that she, at first, was basically unaware that the county commission was interested in pursuing electing status. But after the decision was openly debated, she became an active participant—and a leader—in the planning process. The then chair of the County Commission stated that, once the decision was actually made, both the commission and the then DSS Director were equally anxious to begin working on developing a plan for the county to attain electing county status. In interviews conducted in Summer, 2000 virtually all actors agreed that the then County DSS Director originally resisted the efforts by the County Commission to become an electing county more on a philosophical basis, but once she saw that there was a super-majority on the commission supporting such an effort, she came around and became a leader in designing the actual plan that the county submitted to the state.

A second, and more vocal, opponent of the county's effort to elect was one of the two

minority county commissioners whose reasons for opposition were viewed differently, depending on who one interviewed. According to the county manager, this commissioner's opposition was the result of his (the commissioner's) concern that the funding for the electing counties was not as secure as the funding for the standard counties—if the economy turned down, a major employer left the county, or some other economically disastrous event occurred (the argument went), the county would be left to come up with the additional funds to meet social service needs, over and above allocated state funds. In his view, this was a risk not worth taking. According to the chair of the Board of Commissioners, however, the commissioner's opposition to the electing county effort was based on his status as a spokesman for the African American population in the county and his view that this population would do better on the standard plan than they would on any kind of plan that Craven County would develop on its own. We were not able to interview this county commissioner and so could not get his own views on the situation.

Decision Dynamics—1997-98

The 2000 interviews identified some potential reasons why Craven County decided to elect. These are:

Representative John Nichols' work in talking with the Craven County Board of Commissioners about the unique opportunity that the county had in becoming an electing county;

A belief on the part of some members of the Social Service Board that the 1997 DSS Director of the Year's home county should be an electing county;

A belief, as expressed by the current DSS Board Chair, that welfare reform was the wave of the future and that Craven County should not drag its feet in this;

A desire to move able-bodied welfare recipients out of the system and so reserve cash assistance for the hard-core unemployable;

A desire to reduce case loads in the system and therefore to reduce county

expenditures on cash assistance;

A desire on the part of Republican county commissioners to be creative in addressing the problem of welfare reform while not being perceived as trying to reduce the county welfare budget to zero.

According to the County Manager, the current DSS Director, the 1997 Chair of the Board of Commissioners, and the chair of the DSS board, the process of deciding to become an electing county was not controversial at all. The actors interviewed seemed to express an attitude that the decision to become an electing county was somehow pre-ordained (perhaps because of the Republican majority on the commission or perhaps because of a shared set of values concerning the concept of welfare reform) and that it was therefore not in anybody's interest to attempt to resist the effort. The only actors who seemed to offer any resistance at all were the former County DSS Director, whose resistance was more a difference in philosophy than anything else, and the one county commissioner whose resistance is described above.

The Chair of the DSS Board gave the clearest sense of what officials' expectations of their efforts were. In his view, the Work First Planning Committee was looking for a 25-30% reduction in case loads in the first year of operation. More importantly, the committee wanted to shift the focus of attention of the welfare program in the county from able bodied recipients to what was called "the truly need," children, and the elderly. According to all those interviewed, the immediate goal was not to save money but to change the orientation of "the welfare system" in the county.

Goals, Objectives, or Program Priorities

All interviewees expressed the position that the goal of the effort to become an electing county was *not* to save money in the short run. One county commissioner mentioned that he was offended by the idea that some in the General Assembly thought that county officials would be so mean spirited as to reduce cash assistance down to less than minimal support levels, hoping that

welfare recipients would move to another county.

Cost savings *were* however in the backs of most actors' minds, mostly through the mechanism of reducing welfare roles. Intermediate goals of the effort were the protection of children and the elderly. The current DSS Board Chair expressed the idea that the topic of child protective services and adult (elderly) protective services came up at every DSS Board meeting and that there were vocal advocates of both children and the elderly on the board who would simply not allow the interests of these two groups to be neglected.

Transportation needs were mentioned by several of the interviewees as a barrier to accomplishing the goals of the program. The DSS Board Chair told a story of a former welfare recipient who lived in Havelock but found a job in New Bern. This person had no transportation to allow him to commute the 30 or so miles from his home to work. County DSS paid Craven Area Rural Transportation Services (CARTS) and local taxis to provide transportation for this individual but after one month, the bill for his transportation was approximately \$1800. County DSS located a reasonable used car, purchased it for \$1300 and gave it to the individual. The DSS Board Chair concluded this story by stating that this was "truly an investment" in the future of this individual.

Child care was another barrier mentioned by virtually all the interviewees. Each expressed in some detail, but in varying degrees of compassion, the problems that single parents with multiple children have in paying for child care on a minimum wage job. Nobody had any firm ideas how to solve this problem, but virtually all mentioned it as severe problem

Program Implementation: 1998-2000

Case Load Reductions As mentioned above, county officials expected a 25-30% reduction in case loads in the first year of operation. In fact, the Work First program worked even better than that, according to the DSS Board Chair. In his accounting, actual case loads declined by 18% within the *first three months* of the adoption of Work First. In the first year of Work First, case

loads dropped some 38%; after two years, case loads had dropped over 50%; and in the third year, case loads had dropped 75% from what they were before 1997.⁰ The DSS Board Chair also stated that he thought that a number of welfare recipients voluntarily left the system and went to work in early anticipation of the two-year cap (and because they saw that the system was changing), rather than waiting actually to “bump up” against the cap.

While case loads have dropped and the amount of the county budget going to cash assistance has also dropped, the total social service budget for the county has actually increased. This is partially the result of increases in expenditures in the Medicaid program and other state mandated programs that the county funds.

The Effects of the Fall, 1999 Floods In fall, 1999, Tropical Storm Dennis and Hurricanes Floyd and Irene hit eastern North Carolina. Craven County was spared much of the worst of the flooding except in the northeastern section of the county, near Vanceboro, where various creeks and the Neuse River overflowed their banks and caused many people to move to abandon their homes and move to shelters. Two years before the floods of 1999, Hurricane Fran also caused major flooding on the Neuse and Trent Rivers and several homes built in the flood plain were abandoned. County officials who, by 1999, were still dealing with the aftermath of Fran, were forced to deal with the larger impacts of the 1999 flood. There was a great sense of anticipation on the part of many officials that individuals and families forced from their homes and living in shelters would apply for cash assistance from the county, and that the welfare rolls would thus show a dramatic increase in the second half of 1999. It was therefore with a great sense of relief that county officials discovered that the welfare rolls had not, in fact, increased in late 1999 or early 2000. This lack of an expected increase could be the result of several factors—an increased sense of personal responsibility on the part of county residents; increases in private, non-profit, and religious groups’ assistance efforts for flood victims; federal disaster relief efforts that pre-empted local efforts or, perhaps, a deterrent effect as a result of the changes made in the county welfare program. It is unknown which of these factor had an influence on the welfare statistics in

1999 and 2000.

Flexibility and Autonomy Interviewees who were familiar with the internal operations of Work First (the DSS Director and the DSS Board Chair) mentioned that they felt a greater sense of flexibility and autonomy in the program now than they had before Work First was implemented. The county manager said that the county had more autonomy in welfare policy now than it had five years ago but also mentioned that there was a balancing act between increased and decreased autonomy in various policies. In his view, there was a risk in giving counties too much autonomy in addressing different policy issues. Virtually all of the interviewees did not think that state-county relations had changed very much at all, although, as mentioned earlier, there was some bitterness expressed at the General Assembly for the method developed to choose which counties were actually selected to become electing counties.

Organizational Changes Craven County DSS has not undergone any large organizational changes as a result of the Work First program. When specifically asked about whether Craven County would seek permission from the General Assembly to undertake organizational changes similar to what Wake and Mecklenburg counties had implemented several years ago, the manager said that there was some discussion about this a few years ago but no action on it was undertaken at all. One of the problems is that mental health in Craven County is a regional operation and so all that county did was to develop an annual appropriation for mental health. The manager did express some concern over how little direct control the county had over DSS, the county Health Department, and the mental health office in comparison to state regulations on employment, etc. with which these agencies were required to conform.

The DSS Board chair said that there *had* been some movement of employees at the county DSS office from income maintenance to training and protective services as, first, there was less need for employees in income maintenance and, second, the DSS Board and Director had come to an agreement to emphasize child protective services and care for the elderly. For example, the DSS Board directed the County DSS staff to make changes in the collection of

overdue child support payments. The Board wanted (and DSS implemented) changes to concentrate collection efforts on social services cases. The DSS Board chair used this example to demonstrate the degree of caring on the board for children's issues. There also was some effort to contract out (to a private sector, for-profit vendor) social services—for in-home care of the elderly, for example—but this is outside of the purview of Work First. And there were a few less employees in the County DSS office than there had been prior to 1998.

One organizational change that did occur was the result of the necessity to develop an appeals board for those individuals who were approaching their two-year consecutive cap on benefits or their five-year lifetime cap. State law mandated the creation of an appeals board and allowed the DSS Board to contract this out if they wanted. The Craven County DSS Board, however, decided to appoint itself as the appeals board and took on the additional duties of handling any appeals that might occur. According to the DSS Board Chair, there had only been one such appeal on the two-year cap and this involved an individual who was approaching graduation from a program at East Carolina University. This individual wanted an extension on the two-year cap in order to complete the program at ECU. The Board denied the appeal and directed the individual to pursue the same financing arrangements that non-welfare recipients used to pay college tuition.

Institutional Culture All interviewees noted the change in the institutional culture at the county DSS office but the changes they noted were incremental and not particularly dramatic. *Some* personnel had been shifted from income maintenance to training and protective services and so changed their orientations toward their jobs. There has been *some* increase in the importance attached to accountability—and thus an increased sensitivity to this amongst DSS workers—by the DSS Board since, as the DSS Board chair put it, there was a feeling that the money was now the county's money to disburse rather than the state's money.

Role of Non-Profits None of the interviewees gave us any sense that participation by non-profits in welfare policy in Craven County had increased at all. The DSS Board Chair stated that there

had been some services for in-home care contracted out but when pressed on to whom these contracts had gone, he said they went to private sector firms and specifically not to non-profits. While touting the inclusiveness of the Work First Planning Committee that had been assembled to develop the electing plan in 1997, none of those we interviewed even mentioned that there was any continued increase in participation in the Work First program by these same individuals and groups after their initial work in 1997. Quite a bit of work went into the creation of a job training center which was housed at the County DSS offices but whose classes and programs were offered by staff at Craven Community College, with the assistance of the local Employment Security Commission. The County Manager mentioned in his interview that this was the first time that these three agencies had cooperated in such a venture.

Successes and Failures The chief success of the Work First program, according to the DSS Board Chair, but also echoed by others, is the overall redirection from helping those who were not *truly* in need to helping those people who the DSS Board Chair described as “moving down,” meaning those for whom a lack of cash assistance would be a disaster. In addition the program was now focused on helping truly need children and the elderly. Several interviewees stressed this reorientation toward the elderly and children with some sense of pride. The County Manager identified the change in the program as one way of breaking the cycle of the generational transmission of welfare dependence.

When asked about the chief shortcomings in the program, interviewees were hard put to find any. The current DSS Director expressed some concern about the children of families leaving the cash assistance program. In his view, research could not yet demonstrate that the children of former welfare recipients who were now working were better off—in terms of high school completion, juvenile delinquency rates, and other indicators of social distress—than children of welfare recipients. But he expressed this in a sort of musing fashion, rather than stating outright that this was a serious concern. The DSS Board Chair mentioned that everybody in involved with welfare in Craven County was concerned that nobody falls through the cracks in

the transitional system.

Tracking Welfare Recipients We asked a series of questions about tracking welfare recipients across counties. Each interviewee, in one way or another, expressed concerns about the underdeveloped tracking ability of the county. We posed a hypothetical question about a welfare recipient from Idaho who moved to North Carolina and asked if Craven County had the capacity to identify the number of months of eligibility that this person had remaining and whether the county in Idaho's information on this individual would or could be made available to Craven County. When asked if there was any effort on the part of the state to promote computer standardization or record keeping, the County Manager said that he thought that there was an effort to increase the computerization of records but he was unsure of any standardization effort.

One area in which several of the interviewees expressed surprise was that there was less movement of welfare receiving population than they had expected. Opponents of the entire county electing program, the DSS Board Chair stated, had said that allowing counties to elect would set up a "race to the bottom" as counties would not want to offer a better cash assistance package than their neighbors and so become welfare magnets. According to the DSS Board Chair, there really is little empirical evidence to support this assertion since there was less movement of people in response to differentials in benefits than anybody thought there would be.

Decision to Re-Elect Last, each of the interviewees said that, if given the opportunity to do so again, Craven County would most likely attempt to elect to design its own welfare system. They seemed, to a person, to be proud of the plan they had developed (and its second place ranking amongst all the electing plans submitted) and considered their having been passed over in the process as a political decision which was not based on the merits of the plan that was submitted. The DSS Board Chair even had some numbers to support this view. Analyses by the DSS Board concluded that Craven County would have spent some \$250,000 per year less on its welfare budget if electing status had succeeded and would also have received some \$1.5 million more in state funds under its planned program in comparison to the standard state plan.

Assessment

It is hard to determine whether the situation in Craven County is actually the way the interviewees paint it, since their determination is so positive. All of the interviewees claim that the Work First program is a huge success but that if they had been allowed to go their own way, it would have been an even huger success. Only the DSS Board Chair had any data to back up this claim but he did not say where these projections had come from.

Each of the interviewees individually refused to identify partisanship as a direct reason why the county decided to try to elect but, when pressed, the Republicans who we interviewed—the 1997 Chair of the Board of Commissioners and the current DSS Board Chair—became somewhat defensive in denying that cost savings were a determining factor in their decision. But they then came around to boasting of how much money the program was saving the county and, in the DSS Board Chair's estimation, how much *more* money the county would have saved if its electing plan had actually been approved. It is an interesting argument but one which doesn't seem to hang together logically very well.

Implementation of Work First has, according to those we interviewed, also gone so smoothly as to be virtually seamless. There has been little turmoil in the lives of welfare recipients; virtually all of those recipients have moved easily from the welfare rolls to the workforce, the interviewees tell us. And some data seem to back them up—for example, there has only been one individual who has appealed the denial of benefits after receiving them for two consecutive years. But some of this may have to do with the relative quiescence of welfare recipients in eastern North Carolina in general, and minority welfare recipients in particular. And we also did not interview any welfare recipients; it would have been useful and interesting to do so to see if, from the clients' point of view, the program was succeeding as well as the people who run it think it is.

Also, it was only the County Manager—who did not know much about the internal

running of the DSS—and the current County DSS Director—who knew a great deal about the internal running of the DSS—who both abstracted about how we might actually define a successful Work First program. While the DSS Board Chair and the former Chair of the County Commission both claimed success for the program on the basis of the drop in welfare rolls, the County Manager and the current DSS Director discussed longer-range indicators of success—high school graduation rates for children of those who left the welfare system for work, etc. In the long run, these are the more important indicators, since they have the greater societal impact. However, we arrive at a philosophical impasse at this point. If one assumes that an individual working is a success while an individual who could be working but is receiving welfare benefits is a failure, then Work First in Craven County is a success by definition. And there is a flavor to the interviews conducted with the DSS Board Chair and the former Chair of the County Commission that shows they both are making this assumption. It is a similar assumption I have found among some others concerning contracting out services. If one assumes that any expenditure in the private sector is inherently more efficient than any expenditure in the public sector, then contracted out services are *always* more efficient than publically-produced services. If one assumes that moving a person from the welfare rolls to work is a success, then the Craven County program is simply a success. But if one looks for indicators of life success or family success or generational success, we simply cannot come to the same conclusion since, as the current DSS Director put it, the data simply have not been generated yet.

ENDNOTES

0.1. In the 1980s, Havelock annexed the Cherry Point Marine Air Station and now includes the population of Marines living on the base as part of its official population statistics.

0.2. The numbers supplied by the Tracking County Responses to Welfare Reform project staff do not look as good as this—they show a 34% drop in Work First families from July, 1997 to July, 1999. I cannot explain why there is a disparity in these two sets of numbers. Is the Board Chair overestimating the success of the program? Is there a difference in the start and end period for the change calculation?

Interviews Conducted

Michael Gorman, Chair, Craven County DSS Board, July 27, 2000

Harold Blizzard, Craven County Manager, May 24, 2000

Chuck Tyson, Member, Craven County Board of Commissioners, July 7, 2000

Donn Gunderson, Craven County DSS Director, July 21, 2000

Nancy Coston, former Craven County DSS Director, June 11, 1997