



News Release

Fuquay Solutions

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Former NC Controller Powell Speaks to Pennsylvania Joint Appropriations Committee

Committee Seeks Powell's Insight on Creating Fiscal Analysis Office

Raleigh—Robert Powell, former North Carolina Controller and Senior Advisor for Governmental Policy at Fuquay Solutions www.fuquaysolutions.com, recently addressed the Pennsylvania General Assembly's Joint Appropriations Committee in Harrisburg. Powell was asked to share his insight and experience regarding the establishment of a legislative fiscal analysis office under the control of the legislative branch. Pennsylvania is one of the few states that does not have such a fiscal research unit akin to the federal Congressional Budget Office or North Carolina's Fiscal Research Division.

"I was pleased that the members of the Joint Appropriations Committee were interested in what we had done here in North Carolina," said Powell. "As the former Controller and Deputy State Budget Officer for North Carolina, I was able to give them my thoughts on the benefits of establishing a fiscal research unit within the legislature; as well as share with them some of the lessons we had learned here," he said.

Powell provided the Committee with the history of North Carolina's Fiscal Research Division and the rationale for why it was created in 1971. "In the 1971 Session of the General Assembly, a bill was introduced to establish a staff within the legislature to provide independent support for review and monitoring of budget and revenue activity," Powell told the Committee. "It was intended to provide a separate staff with expertise in budget and revenue forecasting," he said.

"I can attest that the Fiscal Research Division has grown in both size and quality over the past 40 years," said Powell. "It has now established itself as an integral part of the budget development process for the legislature while also becoming a viable watchdog for the execution of the budget when the legislature is not in session," he advised.

Powell concluded his testimony by outlining the essential functions of a legislative fiscal research unit and the importance of such a division maintaining complete independence. "As legislators and legislative leadership changes, a good fiscal research unit can bring consistency of information and institutional knowledge to help new leaders become familiar with issues. This efficiency is necessary to provide continuity of activity within the legislative branch of government," he said. He cautioned, however that, "Legislators should be cautious of staff becoming too involved with issues and subsequently developing their own agenda. Such personal agendas, no matter how well intentioned, could result in difficult positions for elected officials. The staff should be independent both in terms of politics and issues," he recommended.

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The Pennsylvania General Assembly is examining the establishment of a legislative fiscal research unit in order to gain access to more timely revenue forecasts and state financial information for budgeting purpose. Fuquay Soution's Robert Powell was one a several experts to speak at three days of hearings held by the Joint Appropriations Committee.

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