

ROB SCHOFIELD: A decade ago, North Carolina Republicans and their allies in conservative organizations were blasting the incumbent Democrats for gerrymandering elections for partisan gain, abusing power at the General Assembly by not allowing adequate debate on controversial legislation, and stuffing the state budget with pork barrel projects. What a difference a few years in power make. Today, it's Republicans who are perfecting gerrymandering, limiting debate and, as some recent news reports have highlighted, pork barrel spending. The pork is especially noteworthy given GOP claims about wanting to limit spending and bring transparency to government. Turns out that the budget Republican leaders sent to Governor Cooper last month includes 530 direct earmarks for local districts to the tune of more than \$383 million. Not surprisingly, the home counties of powerful Republican leaders got more than their share of the cash. The bottom line: state lawmakers ought not to be inserting special language into the budget to give state money to favorite pet projects. Ten years ago this was a conservative talking point. Unfortunately, it's clear in 2019 that that was just talk. For NC Policy Watch, I'm Rob Schofield.