**The North Carolina Campaign and Election of 1898**

The North Carolina Election of 1898 for Legislative seats became a turning point and even backslide for North Carolina history and politics. In previous election years, the Republican and Populist parties had joined together, resulting in the Republican Party gaining control of both the Governor’s seat and North Carolina seats in the U.S. Senate. As the two parties ran together for a third time, the Democratic Party devised a campaign to regain power.[[1]](#footnote-1) Furnifold Simmons, who had run a successful campaign for the Democrats in 1892, was appointed chairman of the party and given the duty of managing the campaign. The campaign focused almost entirely on white supremacy and used three tools: men who could speak, men who could write, and men who could ride. Speakers, who included future Governor Charles B. Aycock, went across the state to rally white voters. Writers spread propaganda in newspapers, and riders on horseback, known as The Red Shirts, went out to influence white voters to vote Democratically by using violence and scare tactics to intimidate black voters, keeping them from the polls on Election Day.[[2]](#footnote-2) Meanwhile, The Republicans and Populists split the work. Republicans focused the campaign on electoral reform and fair government while Populists tried and failed to take the white supremacy stance themselves. On election day, Democrats returned to power, winning a majority of the seats in the Legislature. This outcome brought lasting effects on North Carolina as the new officials passed legislation to alienate African Americans. In addition, there was not another Republican governor until 1972. North Carolina was also part of a national trend to remove Blacks from office. George White, elected in 1896 and again in 1898, was the last African American elected nationwide to Congress until 1928 and North Carolina didn’t send another African American to Washington until 1992. [[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Graham, Nicholas. North Carolina Collection, "The North Carolina Election of 1898," 2005. Accessed September 1, 2012. http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/history.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Umfleet, LeRae. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources: Office of Archives and History: 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission, "1898 Wilmington Race Riot Report," May 31, 2006. Accessed September 1, 2012. http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Graham, Nicholas. North Carolina Collection, "The North Carolina Election of 1898," 2005. Accessed September 1, 2012. http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/history.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)