



NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.

NEWS RELEASE

Release embargoed until Wednesday, April 4, 1990: May be broadcast Wednesday A.M. and may appear in Wednesday morning or afternoon newspapers.

For more information, call
Ran Coble at the N.C. Center
at (919) 832-2839.

REPUBLICANS MAKE BIG GAINS IN LEGISLATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RANKINGS

Republican legislators have made large gains in effectiveness, and for the first time, a rank-and-file member of the House -- rather than the Speaker -- was named the most effective state Representative, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research announced. Representative David H. Diamont (D-Surry) now holds the distinction of being the most effective member of the House. Speaker of the House Josephus Mavretic (D-Edgecombe) was named second most effective.

Also for the first time, a Republican broke into the top 10 in effectiveness in the House. Minority Leader Johnathan Rhyne (R-Lincoln) was named the fourth most effective House member. Prior to the 1989 session, the highest rank by a Republican in the House was by Betsy Cochran, now in the Senate. She ranked 16th in the Center's 1987 effectiveness rankings. The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research released effectiveness rankings today for all 50 members of the N.C. Senate and all 120 members of the House of Representatives for the current 1989-90 N.C. General Assembly.

"The increase in the number of Republicans elected to the House and the formation of a bipartisan coalition that elected Speaker Joe Mavretic resulted in major changes in the House rankings," says Ran Coble, executive director of the Center. "A key promise in Mavretic's bid to become Speaker was the guarantee of a number of subcommittee chairmanships to Republicans, and for the first time, Republicans had a chance to serve in leadership positions in the House. As a result, all but three of the 29 Republicans who have served more than one term in the House moved up in the rankings."

The 10 members of the N.C. House of Representatives rated most effective were: (1) Diamont (D-Surry); (2) Mavretic (D-Edgecombe); (3) George W. Miller, Jr. (D-Durham); (4) Johnathan L. Rhyne, Jr. (R-Lincoln); (5) Harry E. Payne, Jr. (D-New Hanover); (6) Daniel T. Blue, Jr. (D-Wake); (7) Dennis A. Wicker (D-Lee); (8) R. Samuel Hunt, III (D-Alamance); (9) Joe Hackney (D-Orange); and (10) Robert C. Hunter (D-McDowell). Only four of last session's top 10 made the top echelon again this year.

The 10 Senators rated most effective were: (1) Kenneth C. Royall, Jr. (D-Durham); (2) Marshall A. Rauch (D-Gaston); (3) Henson P. Barnes (D-Wayne); (4) Marc Basnight (D-Dare); (5) Dennis J. Winner (D-Buncombe); (6) William D. Goldston, Jr. (D-Rockingham); (7) George B. Daniel (D-Caswell); (8) James E. Ezzell, Jr. (D-Nash); (9) Robert S. Swain (D-Buncombe); and (10) Ted Kaplan (D-Forsyth).

Though the Senate did not see as radical a shift in power as the House overall, the top 10 did change. Only Royall, Rauch, and Barnes reappeared in the top 10. Former leaders like Sens. Tony Rand and Harold Hardison are no longer in the Senate after losing races for statewide office in 1988, while two other senators retired or were defeated in their bids for re-election. All seven Republican Senators who have served more than one term in the Senate moved up in the rankings.

Senator Royall has ranked first in effectiveness in the Senate all seven times the Center has conducted surveys since 1978. Royall serves as Deputy President Pro Tempore and as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. This is the first time Representative Diamont appeared in the top 10 in the House, advancing from number 18 in the 1987 rankings. Diamont, now in his eighth term, is chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

In each of the Center's previous effectiveness rankings, the Speaker of the House has always topped the list in the House -- first Carl Stewart (1977-80), and then Ramsey (1981-87). Speaker Mavretic moved up 11 places this term to become the second most effective member of the House. Mavretic's climb to second came after his successful challenge to former Speaker Liston Ramsey. Despite his fall from power, Ramsey still was voted the 11th most effective House member.

The rankings are based on surveys completed by legislators themselves, by registered lobbyists based in North Carolina who regularly work in the General Assembly, and by capital news correspondents who cover the legislature every day. These three groups were asked to rate each legislator's effectiveness on the basis of participation in committee work, skill at guiding bills through floor debate, and general knowledge or expertise in special fields. The respondents were also asked to consider the respect the legislators command from their peers, the political power they hold, and their ability to sway the opinions of fellow legislators. "The Center has long maintained that the rankings reflect what's going on in the legislature and its strengths and weaknesses as an institution," says Coble. "In this year of tremendous change in the House, there was an equally large shift in the rankings."

The 1989-90 ratings mark the seventh time the Center has undertaken such an effort. The first edition in 1978 evaluated the performance of the 1977-78 General Assembly. The response rate to this most recent survey was the highest ever. One hundred and eight of the 120 House members (91%) responded, as did 42 of the 50 Senators (84%), 141 of 274 registered lobbyists (51%) based in North Carolina, and 21 of 42 capital news correspondents (50%). Thus, the overall rate of response was 64%, which is far above standards of statistical reliability.

"Evidently, legislators' confidence in this survey is growing steadily," points out Coble. "Each year, more and more legislators have responded to the survey -- and the combined response rates for all three groups have continued to climb too. We think this illustrates a strong belief that the survey is a valid measure of legislative effectiveness."

The Center noted that first-term legislators and members of the minority party -- in this case Republicans -- usually have lower effectiveness rankings. First-timers are less experienced and usually move up in the rankings over time. For example, House members who had served one full previous term moved up an average of 24 notches this year, while second-term Senators moved up an average of 10 places in the rankings.

Republicans are in a minority in both houses and historically receive no appointments to committee chairmanships. However, this term, 23 House Republicans chair committees or subcommittees. As a result, all but three of the 36 House and Senate Republicans with legislative service prior to the 1989 session moved up in this year's rankings.

Longevity of service was a key factor in obtaining a high ranking, whether Democrat or Republican. Of the legislators ranked in the bottom 30 in the 120-member House, only 7 had served more than one prior term. In the Senate, only two of the Senators ranked in the bottom 10 had served more than one prior term in the Senate.

The legislators moving up the most in the rankings in the House all were Republicans. They were: Reps. Harry C. Grimmer (R-Mecklenburg), Johnathan L. Rhyne, Jr. (R-Lincoln), Charles L. Cromer (R-Davidson), and Ann Q. Duncan (R-Forsyth). The Senators moving up the most in the rankings were Democrats -- second-termers George B. Daniel (D-Caswell) and Alexander P. Sands, III (D-Rockingham). By contrast, the legislators in the Senate and the House who lost the most ground in effectiveness were all Democrats.

The highest ranked freshman legislators in the House were George S. Robinson (R-Caldwell), who returned to the House after a one-term absence; Paul Stam, Jr. (R-Wake); and William D. Mills (D-Onslow), who previously served seven terms in the General Assembly. The highest ranked freshmen in the Senate were Wendell H. Murphy (D-Duplin), who served three prior terms in the House; Betsy Cochrane (R-Davie), who served four prior terms in the House; and T. L. "Fountain" Odom (D-Mecklenburg).

Rep. Sharon Thompson (D-Durham) was the highest ranked (16th) woman in the House. Rep. Daniel T. Blue, Jr. (D-Wake) was the highest ranked (6th) black. In the Senate, the highest ranking woman was Helen R. Marvin (D-Gaston) at 19th, while the highest ranking black was William N. Martin (D-Guilford) at 26th.

The Center noted that at least two Senators and eight House members, including several with high effectiveness rankings, will not return to their seats in the legislature next year. For example, in the Senate, former Minority Leader Laurence Cobb (R-Mecklenburg) was appointed to the N.C. Utilities Commission, and Sen. Wanda Hunt (D-Moore) took a job as assistant chief of child support enforcement in the Department of Human Resources. Cobb, at 15th, was the top Republican in the Senate. In the House, Reps. Alex Hall (D-New Hanover) and Sharon Thompson (D-Durham), both in the top 20, are retiring from the legislature. Rep. Ann Duncan (R-Forsyth) is now assistant secretary in the Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, while Rep. William T. Watkins (D-Granville) died in office.

The effectiveness rankings are published as a supplement to a larger publication called Article II: A Guide to the 1989-90 N.C. Legislature, which was released in May 1989. This book contains biographical and voting information on each legislator. Also included are the following:

- business and home addresses;
- party affiliation, district number, counties represented, and number of terms;
- occupation and education;
- committee appointments;
- number of bills sponsored and number of these which were enacted into law;
- individual votes on important bills in the 1987-88 session; and
- past effectiveness rankings.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation created to examine state government policies and practices. It does not endorse candidates. The Center is supported in part by grants from the Z. Smith Reynolds and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundations, both in Winston-Salem. Other funding comes from 114 corporate contributors and more than 600 individual and organizational members. The N.C. Center publishes a quarterly magazine called North Carolina Insight and issues book-length research reports. Past studies have been issued on campaign disclosure laws, school finance, and a comparison of the formal powers of all 50 governors.

Copies of Article II: A Guide to the 1989-90 N.C. Legislature and the supplement containing the **new effectiveness rankings** are available from the Center for \$25.20 a set, plus \$1.50 postage and handling if mailed. Write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602 or call (919) 832-2839.

For more information about the legislative effectiveness rankings, call Ran Coble at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research at (919) 832-2839.