



**NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.**

News Release

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SOME OF MOST EFFECTIVE LEGISLATORS LEAVING, SAYS POLICY CENTER

The latest rankings of legislators' effectiveness are out, and some of the most effective lawmakers in both parties are leaving the legislature, says the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. Some legislators are running for higher office, some are switching to the judicial branch or to lobbying, and some are retiring.

In the House, former Representatives Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston) and Chuck Neely (R-Wake), ranked 8th and 20th in effectiveness, respectively, resigned to run for the Republican nomination for Governor. In the Senate, Majority Leader Roy Cooper (D-Nash), ranked 3rd, is running for Attorney General, while Senators Beverly Perdue (D-Craven) and Betsy Cochrane (R-Davie), ranked 6th and 16th respectively, are running for Lieutenant Governor. Rep. Cherie Berry (R-Catawba) also is leaving the House to run for Labor Commissioner. Rep. Jerry Braswell (D-Wayne), ranked 18th, has switched over to the judicial branch after being appointed a Superior Court judge, while Rep. Thomas Hardaway (D-Halifax), ranked 11th, is now a lobbyist for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America in Atlanta. Former four-time Speaker of the House Rep. Liston Ramsey (D-Madison) is retiring, as are Representatives John Brown (R-Wilkes), James Carpenter (R-Macon), Paul "Jaybird" McCrary (D-Davidson), Richard Moore (D-Cabarrus), and Timothy Tallent (R-Cabarrus), as well as Senators Don East (R-Surry) and Jim Phillips (D-Davidson).

"Over the last 20 years, turnover in the North Carolina legislature has averaged about a fifth of the Senate and a fourth of the House in each session," says Ran Coble, executive director of the Center. "This year, one of the most important developments is who is leaving. Some of the most effective legislators in both parties won't be back in 2001."

The 10 Most Effective Legislators in the House and Senate

In the House, the 10 most effective Representatives are **Speaker of the House Jim Black** (D-Mecklenburg), **Majority Leader Phil Baddour** (D-Wayne and Chair of the Judiciary IV Committee), **Rep. William Culpepper** (D-Chowan and Chair of the Rules Committee), **Speaker of the House Pro Tempore Joe Hackney** (D-Orange and Chair of the Judiciary I Committee), **David Redwine** (D-Brunswick and Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee), **Martin Nesbitt** (D-Buncombe and Chair of the Ways and Means Committee), **Ruth Easterling** (D-Mecklenburg and Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee), former **Minority Leader Leo Daughtry** (R-Johnston), **George Miller** (D-Durham and Co-Chair of the Finance Committee), and **Thomas Wright** (D-New Hanover and Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Capital Budget). This

was the first appearance in the top ten for Representatives Baddour (up 20 spots in the rankings), Culpepper (up 37), Redwine (up 13), Easterling (up 34), and Wright (up 48).

In the Senate, **President Pro Tempore Marc Basnight** (D-Dare), topped the rankings for the fourth consecutive session. Following him in the top 10 in effectiveness are Senators **Tony Rand** (D-Cumberland and Chair of the Rules Committee), **Majority Leader Roy Cooper** (D-Nash and Chair of the Judiciary I Committee), **David Hoyle** (D-Gaston and Co-Chair of the Finance Committee), **Aaron Plyler** (D-Union and Co-Chair of the Appropriations/Base Budget Committee), **Beverly Perdue** (D-Craven and Co-Chair of the Appropriations/Base Budget Committee), **John Kerr** (D-Wayne and Co-Chair of the Finance Committee), **Fountain Odom** (D-Mecklenburg and Co-Chair of the Appropriations/Base Budget Committee), **Howard Lee** (D-Orange and Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education), and **R.C. Soles** (D-Columbus and Chair of the Commerce Committee).

Influence of the Minority Party on the Rise

In 1999, Democrats had a 35-15 majority in the 50-member state Senate, while also regaining control of the 120-member House by a margin of 66-54. In the 1995-96 session, Republicans had a 68-52 majority in the House, and a slim 61-59 majority in 1997-98. In losing control of the House, which they held from 1995 through 1998, Republicans also lost their committee chairmanships. As a result, most House Democrats went up in the rankings, and most Republicans went down. But, though Republicans lost committee chairmanships and positions of leadership in the House, they still retained a lot of clout. Though in the minority this year, six Republicans ranked in the top 24 in effectiveness in the House -- Representatives Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston), Richard Morgan (R-Moore), Lyons Gray (R-Forsyth), Ed McMahan (R-Mecklenburg), Chuck Neely (R-Wake), and George Holmes (R-Yadkin).

"In recent years, the minority party has increased its influence in the state House," says the Center's Coble. "In both of the last two sessions, the minority party claimed at least one-fourth of the 24 legislators ranked highest in effectiveness -- whether it was the Democrats in the minority last session or the Republicans in the minority this session." Coble continued, "As the margin between majority and minority status gets closer, the majority party is having to create more room for the minority party."

Uncontested Seats in the 2000 Elections

One unexpected side effect of the heightened competition between the parties has been an increase in the number of uncontested seats in the legislature. "In effect, the two parties are looking at voter registration statistics and deciding where to fight each other," says Coble. "But this strategy leaves almost one-third of the legislators with token or no opposition at all in each election."

For example, in the 1998 legislative elections, Republicans did not contest 31 seats, and Democrats did not contest 26 seats. And before the first vote has even been cast this year, 51 of the total of 170 legislative seats have already been determined, with Republicans sure to retain 27 seats and Democrats sure to retain 24 seats.

Biggest Jumps in the Rankings and Highest Ranked Freshmen, African Americans, and Women

In the House, members of the majority party made the most significant gains as Democrats regained control. With majority status comes committee chairmanships, which always have been a significant predictor of effectiveness, says the Center. With his appointment as Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Thomas Hardaway (D-Halifax) moved up the most in the rankings, 86 places, to 11th. Rep. Jerry Braswell

(D-Wayne) also gained 77 places to rank 18th. Representatives Andrew Dedmon (D-Cleveland) and Verla Insko (D-Orange) also moved up more than 60 places in the rankings. Rep. Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston) was the highest ranking Republican in the House at 8th, and Rep. Phil Haire (D-Jackson) was the highest ranked true freshman at 50th.

In the Senate, with less turnover and no change of party control from 1995 to 1999, returning members of both parties made slight gains. Sen. Walter Dalton (D-Rutherford) moved up the most places (up 18) to rank 12th. Sen. Eric Reeves (D-Wake) moved up 11 spots to rank 13th, and Sen. Allen Wellons (D-Johnston) moved up 9 places to rank 22nd. Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus) was the highest ranking Republican in the Senate at 14th, moving up 3 places in the rankings. Among those who declined in the rankings, there are almost as many Democrats as Republicans. Sen. Daniel Clodfelter (D-Mecklenburg) was the highest ranking freshman in the Senate at 19th.

Sen. Howard Lee (D-Orange) was the highest ranking African American legislator in the Senate at 9th. Rep. Thomas Wright (D-New Hanover) was the highest ranking African American in the House at 10th. Sen. Beverly Perdue (D-Craven), Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee, was the highest ranking woman in the Senate at 6th. In the House, the highest ranking woman also was Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Ruth Easterling (D-Mecklenburg) at 7th.

How the Rankings Are Done

The Center's rankings are based on surveys completed by legislators themselves, by registered lobbyists and lead legislative liaisons who are based in North Carolina and who regularly work in the General Assembly, and by capital news correspondents. 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 also were asked to consider the respect legislators command from their peers, the political power they hold (by virtue of office, longevity, or personal attributes), their ability to sway the opinions of fellow legislators, and their aptitude for the overall legislative process.

"Holding a committee chairmanship is one of the best predictors of success in the rankings -- regardless of party," says Coble. "In the House, all but one of the 12 highest ranking members are committee chairs or majority party leaders. And in the Senate, all but one of the 15 highest ranking members are committee chairs or majority party leaders." Being a committee chair was not a guarantee of success, however. Four committee chairs in the House were among the 21 members ranked least effective, and one committee chair in the Senate finished in the bottom 11.

The 1999-2000 rankings mark the twelfth time the Center has undertaken this comprehensive survey. The first edition in 1978 evaluated the performance of the 1977-78 General Assembly. The response rate to the survey continues to be very high. Eighty-four of the 120 House members (70%) responded to the Center's survey, as did 37 of the 50 Senators (74%), 142 of 328 lead legislative liaisons and registered lobbyists who regularly work in the legislature and who are based in North Carolina (43%), and 7 of 28 capital news correspondents (25%). The overall rate of response was 51%, well above standards of statistical reliability.

National Praise for the Center's Rankings

Several states, including North Carolina, Arkansas, California, Texas, Washington, and Florida, rank the effectiveness of their legislators using different methods. "It is hard to deny that the ratings, when done responsibly, serve a legitimate public purpose," says a 1996 report about state legislative rankings in *Governing*

magazine, published by Congressional Quarterly, Inc. "The ratings issued by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research are perhaps the most straightforward and most widely respected." Another independent review of state rankings in 1992 reached the same conclusion. "Most attempts at reputational rankings of state legislators don't deserve much credibility because of three problems: (1) no precise definition of who is being polled, (2) a low response rate among those polled because legislators and lobbyists don't want to risk getting caught making statements suggesting people they work with are ineffective, or (3) definitions of effectiveness that equate effectiveness with helping to enact an interest group's agenda," said *State Policy Reports*. "Over the years, *Reports* has seen many of these...that fail one or another of these tests. The exception is the rankings that have been done since 1978 by the North Carolina Center."

The effectiveness rankings are published as a supplement to *Article II: A Guide to the 1999-2000 N.C. Legislature*, which was released in 1999. The Center's legislative handbook profiles each member of the General Assembly and includes the following biographical and voting information:

- business and home addresses, telephone and fax numbers;
- office room number, phone number, and e-mail at the legislature;
- party affiliation, district number, and counties represented;
- number of terms served;
- committee assignments;
- the number of bills sponsored and enacted into law in the 1997-98 session;
- individual votes on 15 of the most important bills in the 1997-98 session;
- each legislator's occupation and education; and
- past effectiveness rankings (1981-97).

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization created to study public policy issues facing North Carolina and to evaluate state government programs. The Center does not endorse candidates. The Center receives general operating support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, with additional funding from 13 other foundations, 190 corporate contributors, and nearly 1,000 individuals and organizational members across the state. The Center publishes a magazine, *North Carolina Insight*, and book-length research reports. The Center recently has conducted studies on children with special needs, Hispanic/Latino health in North Carolina, wood chip mills and state forestry management, and trends and changes in North Carolina's citizen legislature. The Center currently is studying governance of public higher education in all 50 states, the state's record in sustaining public school reforms, and state lotteries.

The new effectiveness rankings are available from the Center for \$10. A set of publications including *Article II: A Guide to the 1999-2000 N.C. Legislature* (\$22.50), the effectiveness rankings (\$10), and the rankings of the most influential lobbyists (\$8, to be released in August 2000) is available for \$35. To order, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order through the Center's Website at www.ncinsider.com/nccppr.

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

Note to the News Media

In reporting the rankings of effectiveness of the N. C. General Assembly for members of the legislative delegation in your area, we always suggest that you report the long-term trend for a particular Senator or Representative to reflect their effectiveness over time. This has been particularly important in the 120-member House of Representatives over the last eight years because control of the House went from the Democrats in 1993-94 to the Republicans for two sessions in 1995-98 and then back to the Democrats in 1999-2000. Since the committee chairs are chosen by the majority party, this has resulted in a lot of movement and changes in the effectiveness rankings in the House over the last eight years. Over the twenty-four year history of the rankings, we have observed that there are at least three predictors of a high ranking in effectiveness – being a committee chair, longevity of service, and personal skills, such as skill in debate or doing your homework in committee.