



**NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
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News Release

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**LEGISLATURE'S SOPHOMORE CLASS MAKES BIGGEST JUMPS
IN LATEST EFFECTIVENESS RANKINGS**

The sophomore class of legislators elected in 2003 is rapidly gaining influence in the latest rankings of effectiveness for members of the 2005-2006 North Carolina General Assembly, says the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. In a reversal of the fabled sophomore slump, 15 of the 17 members of the state House of Representatives who made the biggest jumps in effectiveness are serving their second two-year term. The Center's rankings are based on surveys of the legislators themselves, registered lobbyists, and the capital news media. The Center also released rankings of legislators' attendance and roll call voting participation.

Center director Ran Coble says the Center compiles the three sets of rankings to provide citizens with different ways to evaluate the performance of their legislators. He says, "The rankings of attendance and voting participation tell citizens how often their legislator was there to represent them. The effectiveness rankings tell citizens how effective their legislator was when he or she was there. The surveys hold a mirror up to the legislature, and the rankings are the reflection."

The biggest leap in effectiveness is by sophomore Rep. Bob England (D-Rutherford), who moved up 64 positions to 40th in the 120-member House. England received an important committee chairmanship in only his second term – co-chair of the Education Subcommittee on Community Colleges. Second-term Rep. Bruce Goforth (D-Buncombe) is the second biggest gainer in effectiveness in the House, jumping 41 positions to 39th. The Republicans making the biggest gains in effectiveness also are sophomores. They are Rep. Carolyn Justice (R-Pender) and Bill Daughtridge (R-Nash), who moved up 24 and 23 positions, respectively, to 45th and 44th. Daughtridge provided a key vote that allowed passage of the state lottery, and Justice is co-chair of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Only one Senator, Clark Jenkins (D-Edgecombe), moved up more than 10 positions in the 50-member state Senate. Jenkins also is serving his second term, chairs the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, and rose 22 positions to 18th in effectiveness.

In addition to these second-term legislators, several freshman lawmakers have surprisingly high effectiveness rankings. Rep. Linda Coleman (D-Wake) has the highest ranking ever for a first-term female lawmaker in the House at 38th and fifth highest ever for any freshman. Freshman legislators usually finish in the bottom third of the rankings. Coleman managed to halt passage of the state budget last year in an attempt to get House leaders to include a larger pay increase for state employees. Senator Julia Boseman (D-New Hanover) also has the highest ranking (20th) ever for a first-term female legislator in the Senate and second highest ever for a freshman.

Top Ten in Effectiveness Relatively Unchanged

The top 10 in effectiveness are mostly the same faces from the last biennial rankings. In the Senate, President Pro Tempore Marc Basnight (D-Dare) maintains his ranking as the most effective Senator, a distinction he has held for a record seven sessions in a row. Senators Tony Rand (D-Cumberland) and David Hoyle (D-Gaston) are again rated as 2nd and 3rd most effective, respectively. And, for the second session in a row, the highest-ranking Republican in the Senate is Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus) at 10th, who chairs the Judiciary II Committee. The next highest-ranked Republican is Minority Leader Philip Berger (R-Rockingham), at 16th.

In the House, Jim Black (D-Mecklenburg) ranks first for the fourth consecutive session. Black is in his fourth term as Speaker of the House, and House Speakers have finished first in the rankings every year but 1989 and 1997. Former Rules Committee chair Bill Culpepper III (D-Chowan) ranks 2nd, and House Majority Leader Joe Hackney (D-Orange) ranks 3rd. Culpepper since has been appointed to the N.C. Utilities Commission.

The top House Republicans in effectiveness are Speaker Pro Tempore Richard Morgan (R-Moore) at 6th in the 120-member House and Wilma Sherrill (R-Buncombe) at 9th. Morgan served as Co-Speaker of the House during the 2003-2004 session. House Republicans are bitterly divided, and Morgan is being challenged by a fellow Republican in the May primary election. Sherrill, also the highest-ranked woman in the House, is co-chair of the Appropriations Committee, but has announced she has breast cancer and has decided not to run for re-election.

Center director Coble says that over the 28-year history of the rankings, three factors have tended to be predictors of a high ranking in effectiveness – being a committee chair, longevity of service, and a legislator's personal skills, such as doing your committee homework or skill in floor debate. However, it's never been just position and power that matter, but hard work and individual skills too, says Coble. He points out that 14 House members with committee chairmanships finished in the bottom 40 spots. The surprise this year is the strong showing of legislators in only their second term.

Legislators with Perfect Attendance Records

This marks the third time the Center has tabulated attendance and roll calling voting participation rankings, using official records from the General Assembly. In the state Senate, which met for 126 days last year, six Senators earned perfect attendance records – Senators Doug Berger (D-Franklin), Andrew Brock (R-Davie), John Kerr III (D-Wayne), Keith Presnell (R-Yancey), Richard Stevens (R-Wake), and A.B. Swindell IV (D-Nash). Swindell also garnered a perfect attendance record in the 2003 legislative session.

In the state House, which met for 125 days in 2005, 12 members attended 100 percent of the time. They are: John Blust (R-Guilford), Becky Carney (D-Mecklenburg), George Cleveland (R-Onslow), Lorene Coates (D-Rowan), Jim Crawford Jr. (D-Granville), Bill Faison (D-Orange), Phillip Frye (R-Mitchell), Earl Jones (D-Guilford), Edward Jones (D-Halifax), Mickey Michaux Jr. (D-Durham), Edd Nye (D-Bladen), and Bill Owens Jr. (D-Pasquotank). Coates and Michaux also had perfect attendance records in the 2003 legislative session, and Owens' 2005 record is a three-peat since he garnered perfect attendance records in the 2001, 2003, and 2005 sessions.

The Center praised the dedication of most legislators in attending the session last year. Forty-four of the 50 members of the Senate and 103 of the 120 members of the House attended more than 90 percent of the days in session. Coble says, "That's a strong attendance record for part-time legislators who have full-time jobs, and many have to drive a great distance every week."

Three Senators voted in all 1,031 electronically recorded roll call votes last year – Andrew Brock (R-Davie), Jeanne Lucas (D-Durham), and Keith Presnell (R-Yancey). Senators Neal Hunt (R-Wake) and A.B. Swindell IV (D-Nash) missed only one vote. One member of the House voted in all 1,228 votes electronically recorded in that chamber – Representative Nelson Dollar (R-Wake).

In odd-numbered years, the Center publishes two additional evaluations of legislative performance. *Article II*, the Center's guide to the legislature, includes data on how many bills each legislator got passed out of the total he or she introduced. The guide also includes all members' votes on what legislators said were the 12 most important bills of the session. The Center now publishes five different legislative performance indicators – effectiveness, attendance, voting participation, and success in getting bills passed – as well as votes on what legislators said were the most significant bills in the last session.

How the Effectiveness Rankings Are Done

The Center's effectiveness rankings are based on surveys completed by the legislators themselves, by registered lobbyists who are based in North Carolina and who regularly work in the General Assembly, and by capital news reporters. These three groups were asked to rate each legislator's effectiveness on the basis of participation in committee work, skill at guiding bills through committees and in floor debates, 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 skills), their ability to sway the opinions of fellow legislators, and their aptitude for the overall legislative process.

This year's rankings mark the fifteenth 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-one of the 120 House members (68 percent) responded to the Center's survey this year, as did 36 of the 50 Senators (72 percent), 173 of 442 registered lobbyists who regularly work in the legislature and who are based in North Carolina (39 percent) and 10 of 16 capital news correspondents (63 percent) – all well above accepted standards of statistical validity.

National Praise for the Center's Rankings

Several states – including Arkansas, California, Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington – have ranked the effectiveness of their legislators using different methods. California has ranked legislators in terms of effectiveness, integrity, energy, and intelligence. "It is hard to deny that the ratings, when done responsibly, serve a legitimate public purpose," said a 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 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, attendance, and voting participation rankings are published as a supplement to *Article II: A Guide to the 2005-2006 N.C. Legislature*, which was released in 2005. The Center's legislative guide profiles each member of the General Assembly and includes the following biographical and voting information:

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| — occupation and education; | — number of terms served; |
| — business and home addresses; | — committee assignments; |
| — telephone and fax numbers; | — the number of bills sponsored and enacted into law in the 2003-2004 session; |
| — room number, phone number, and e-mail address at the legislature; | — individual votes on 12 of the most important bills in the 2003-2004 session; and |
| — party affiliation, district number, and counties represented; | — past effectiveness rankings (1985-2005). |

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research corporation created in 1977 to evaluate state government programs and to study public policy issues facing North Carolina. 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 eight other private foundations, 140 corporate contributors, and almost 600 individual and organizational members. The Center publishes a journal, *North Carolina Insight*, and book-length research reports, including the citizens' guide to the legislature. The Center recently has conducted in-depth studies on the teacher shortage in North Carolina, domestic violence, economic development in Eastern North Carolina, and the pros and cons of state lotteries.

The new effectiveness rankings are available from the Center for \$10. A set of publications including *Article II: A Guide to the 2005-2006 N.C. Legislature* (\$25), the effectiveness rankings (\$10), and rankings of the most influential lobbyists (\$10, to be released later this summer) is available for \$40. To order, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order by email from thromley@nccppr.org.

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