



**NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
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NEWS RELEASE

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**SOME OF MOST EFFECTIVE STATE SENATORS WON'T BE BACK IN 2011,
SAYS POLICY CENTER**

The latest rankings of legislators' effectiveness are out, and some of the most effective state Senators will not be back in 2011, says the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. At least five of the 16 most effective Senators already have stepped down or are not running for re-election. The Center's effectiveness rankings are based on responses to surveys from the legislators themselves, registered lobbyists, and the capital news media who cover state government. The Center also released new rankings of legislators' attendance and participation in roll call votes.

Three Senators in the top echelon of effectiveness are calling it quits after 2010 following long tenures in the legislature. Sen. David Hoyle (D-Gaston) ranks 3rd and is Chair of the Senate Rules Committee. He also has been Co-Chair of the Finance Committee for many years. He is serving his ninth two-year term in the Senate but chose not to seek re-election this year. Hoyle has been in the top five in effectiveness for six sessions. Sen. R.C. Soles (D-Columbus) ranks 12th in effectiveness and is the longest-serving member of the General Assembly with 21 terms. Soles is Chair of the Commerce Committee and has been ranked in the top 20 in the Senate since the 1981 session. Sen. Charles Albertson (D-Duplin) is 15th in the new rankings and also is not running for re-election. He is Co-Chair of the Senate Appropriations/Base Budget Committee and has been ranked in the top 20 in effectiveness in seven of his 11 terms in the legislature.

Two other top Senators in effectiveness already have accepted appointments in Governor Beverly Perdue's administration. Former Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand (D-Cumberland), who ranks 2nd in effectiveness in the new rankings, resigned in December to accept an appointment as Chairman of the Post-Release Supervision and Parole Commission. David Weinstein (D-Robeson) is 16th in the new rankings but left the Senate last October to become Director of the Governor's Highway Safety Program. A total of eight Democrats and two Republicans will not return to the Senate in 2011.

"Over the last 20 years, turnover in the North Carolina legislature has averaged about a fifth of each chamber each session," says Ran Coble, executive director of the Center. "This year, the Senate has hit that mark before a single vote has been cast, and some of its most effective members are not coming back."

President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight (D-Dare) ranks 1st in the Senate for a record-breaking ninth consecutive session. Speaker Joe Hackney (D-Orange) ranks 1st in the House for the second consecutive

session. Hackney has been ranked in the top 20 in effectiveness since 1983, regardless of whether he was in the majority or minority party.

Coble also noted that six of the 20 Republicans in the state Senate finished in the top 22 in effectiveness. Republicans are the minority party in the 50-member Senate, where Democrats hold a 30-20 edge. Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus) ranks 7th in effectiveness, Minority Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) ranks 11th, Richard Stevens (R-Wake) ranks 13th, Tom Apodaca (R-Henderson) ranks 17th, Stan Bingham (R-Davidson) ranks 21st, and Pete Brunstetter (R-Forsyth) ranks 22nd.

Biggest Jumps and Declines in Effectiveness

Two Republicans also made the biggest jumps in effectiveness in the state House of Representatives, where Democrats hold a 68-52 majority. In the 120-member House, Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) made the biggest jump in the effectiveness rankings. He moved up 63 places from 95th in 2007 to 32nd in the new rankings. He serves as the Republican Whip in the House.

The other two biggest jumps in the House were posted by Wil Neumann (R-Gaston), who jumped 38 positions from 107th to 69th, and by Cullie Tarleton (D-Watauga), who moved up 37 positions from 83rd to 46th. The biggest jumps in the 50-member Senate were posted by Floyd McKissick Jr. (D-Durham), who moved up 23 positions from 46th to 23rd, and by Tony Foriest (D-Alamance), who jumped 16 places from 40th to 24th.

The biggest drops in effectiveness rankings in both chambers were posted by legislators who already have resigned from the General Assembly or who have decided not to run for re-election. The biggest decline in the House was posted by Ty Harrell (D-Wake), who plummeted 58 spots from 52nd in 2007 to 110th in 2009. Harrell resigned in September 2009 amid an investigation of his campaign finances by the State Board of Elections. Bonner Stiller (R-Brunswick) saw the second biggest drop in effectiveness from 46th to 77th. Stiller resigned from the House last June to devote more time to his family and law firm. In the Senate, Larry Shaw (D-Cumberland) dropped 14 positions from 33rd to 47th, the largest decline in effectiveness in the Senate. Shaw announced in February that he would not seek re-election.

The Highest-Ranked Freshmen

The highest-ranked freshman in the state Senate is Josh Stein (D-Wake), an attorney, who debuts in the rankings at 19th. The highest-ranked freshman in the state House is Kelly Alexander Jr. (D-Mecklenburg), who ranks 84th. Alexander is a funeral director who serves as the Democratic Freshman Leader. Johnathan Rhyne (R-Lincoln) ranks 61st in his first term back in the House after a 17-year absence. He is not a true freshman since he returned to the House in 2009 after previously serving there from 1985 through 1992.

The Center says longevity of service in the legislature is historically a significant factor in obtaining a high effectiveness ranking. Of those who finished in the bottom 20 in the House, 10 are freshmen.

Legislators with Perfect Attendance Records

This marks the fifth time the Center has also tabulated rankings of attendance and participation in roll call votes, using official records from the General Assembly. In the state Senate, two members earned perfect attendance records – Senators John Snow (D-Cherokee) and A.B. Swindell IV (D-Nash). Swindell has had perfect attendance for four consecutive sessions.

In the state House, 21 members tied for first with 100 percent attendance: Representatives Hugh Blackwell (R-Burke), John Blust (R-Guilford), Justin Burr (R-Stanly), George Cleveland (R-Onslow), Jim Crawford Jr. (D-Granville), Nelson Dollar (R-Wake), Bill Faison (D-Orange), Elmer Floyd (D-Cumberland), Phillip Frye (R-Mitchell), Mitch Gillespie (R-McDowell), David Guice (R-Transylvania), Julia Howard

(R-Davie), Carolyn Justus (R-Henderson), Ric Killian (R-Mecklenburg), Nick Mackey (D-Mecklenburg), Mickey Michaux Jr. (D-Durham), Shirley Randleman (R-Wilkes), Tim Spear (D-Washington), Sarah Stevens (R-Surry), Cullie Tarleton (D-Watauga), and Doug Yongue (D-Scotland). This is the highest number of House members garnering perfect attendance records since the Center began tabulating the attendance rankings in 2002.

Michaux has had perfect attendance for four consecutive sessions. Blust, Cleveland, Crawford, and Frye had perfect attendance records for the last three sessions in 2005, 2007, and 2009. Dollar and Yongue had perfect attendance records in the last two sessions.

The Center praised the dedication of most legislators in attending the session last year. Forty-two of the 50 members of the Senate and 113 of the 120 members of the House attended more than 90 percent of the days in session. Coble says, "That's an impressive attendance record for part-time legislators who have full-time jobs back home, and many have to drive a great distance every week."

Three Senators voted in all 1,211 electronically-recorded roll call votes last year – Andrew Brock (R-Davie), Neal Hunt (R-Wake), and John Snow (D-Cherokee). Brock also cast a vote every time in the 2003, 2005, and 2007 sessions. Two members of the House voted in all 1,375 votes electronically recorded in that chamber – Nelson Dollar (R-Wake) and Pat Hurley (R-Randolph). Dollar also participated in every vote in the previous two sessions.

Center director Ran Coble says the Center compiles the three sets of rankings to give citizens 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."

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 introduced and how many he or she got passed. 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, success in getting bills passed, and votes on 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 are 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 are asked to consider the respect that legislators command from their peers, his or her ethics, 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 17th 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. Seventy-one (60 percent) of 119 House members (one member resigned at the end of the session) responded to the Center's survey this year, as did 28 of the 50 Senators (56 percent), 156 of 471 registered lobbyists who regularly work in the legislature and who are based in North Carolina (33 percent), and 8 of 14 capital news correspondents (57 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 even 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 2009-2010 N.C. Legislature*, which was released in 2009. 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 previous session; |
| — room number, phone number, and e-mail address at the legislature; | — individual votes on 12 of the most important bills in the previous session; and |
| — party affiliation, district number, and counties represented; | — past effectiveness rankings (1987-2007). |

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 is supported in part by a grant for general operating support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, with additional support from 12 other private foundations, 120 corporate contributors, and about 500 individual and organizational members. The Center publishes a journal called *North Carolina Insight* and in-depth research reports, including a study of governance of public universities in all 50 states. The Center recently has conducted studies of the history of mental health reform in North Carolina, key issues facing community colleges in North Carolina, how to prevent high school dropouts, and ways to reduce domestic violence. Upcoming studies will examine key issues facing the state's aging population, mental health reform, and policies on financial aid for students in public and private colleges and universities.

The new effectiveness rankings are available from the Center for \$10. A set of publications including *Article II: A Guide to the 2009-2010 N.C. Legislature* (\$25), the effectiveness rankings (\$10), and rankings of the most influential lobbyists (\$10, to be released in August) is available for \$40. To order the printed booklet, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or email Tammy Bromley at tbromley@nccppr.org. To order an electronic copy of the booklet, email Tammy Bromley at tbromley@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.