



N.C. CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY
RESEARCH

From The Center Out

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

Your source for nonpartisan research and analysis on state policy issues

April-May-June 2010

CENTER RELEASES NEW RANKINGS OF LEGISLATORS' EFFECTIVENESS

The latest rankings of legislators' effectiveness are out, and some of the top-ranked state Senators will not be back in 2011. At least five of the 16 most effective Senators already have stepped down or are not running for re-election. The effectiveness rankings by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research 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. At least eight Democrats and two Republicans will not return to the state Senate in 2011.

"Over the last 20 years, turnover in the legislature has averaged about a fifth of each chamber each session," said Ran Coble, executive director of the Center. "This year, the Senate hit that mark even before a single vote was cast in the May 4th primaries, and some of its most effective members are not coming back."

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

*Rankings of Effectiveness, Attendance,
and Roll Call Voting Participation for the
North Carolina General Assembly*



A report by

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research

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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.

Why the Center Does the Rankings

The Center compiles the three sets of rankings to give citizens different ways to evaluate the performance of their legislators. Coble said, “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.

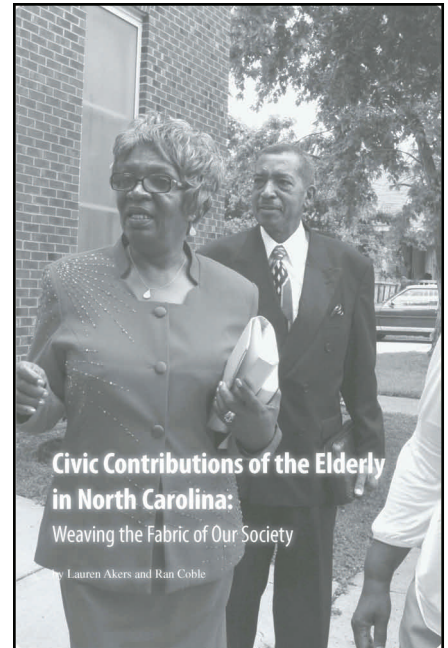
The Center’s effectiveness rankings always garner extensive statewide press coverage. Already, the rankings have been covered in 107 articles in 66 newspapers and 65 editorials or columns, as well as at least 7 blogs on the Internet. A *Winston-Salem Journal* editorial said, “‘Buyer beware’ is good advice for anyone purchasing a major item. It’s also pertinent to voters. Fortunately for North Carolina, the private nonpartisan North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research publishes a buyer’s guide to incumbent legislators, one that can be very helpful to voters as they try to determine if their local lawmaker is any good at the job.” D.G. Martin, whose column was reprinted in 35 newspapers, wrote, “The effectiveness of legislators ebbs and rises from day to day. No rating system is perfect. But the Center’s rankings, which have been a part of North Carolina political life for 30 years, are a valuable service – especially for legislators, who have to remember that their work is being graded systematically. And, that report cards are going to be sent home.”

CENTER SAYS SENIORS ARE A HUGE CIVIC RESOURCE FOR THE STATE

A new study by the Center finds that the civic contributions of the elderly are a huge civic resource for the state and will be even more important as the state's population ages. The elderly vote at higher rates than the population at large. They return the census at higher rates than other age groups. They give a higher percentage of their income to nonprofits in the community. And surprisingly, for those that use the Internet, they are even more likely than the Baby Boom generation (born in 1946-64) to be civically engaged online.

Mebane Rash, editor of the Center's journal, *North Carolina Insight*, said, "North Carolina's population aged 65 and over will double during the next 20 years as Baby Boomers begin turning 65 in 2011. We need to utilize this great civic resource. Our current seniors vote, volunteer, donate money to nonprofits, and return the census at higher rates than succeeding generations. They do the hard work of being a citizen. The more civically engaged our future generations of seniors are, the better off North Carolina will be."

Bill Friday, former President of the UNC System, said, "Thoughtful North Carolinians need to consider the talent pool of the elders that are living in our state. They are people of great ability. Some are people with international experience. They all have something to contribute. The question is how to best utilize this great accumulation of talent."



Seniors Have Higher Voting Rates

In the November 2008 elections, 1.14 million North Carolinians aged 65 and over were registered to vote in North Carolina. Voter turnout for this group was 76 percent, compared with 70 percent for all age groups. Male voters aged 65 and over had an even higher voter turnout rate of 78 percent.

Elderly Return Census Forms at Higher Rates

Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is a headcount of everyone residing in the United States. With the 2010 census now well underway, the Center's study found that older North Carolinians have the highest return rates. Nationwide, the census return rate in 2000 was 78 percent. Those aged 65 and older had the highest return rate of 89 percent.

Charitable Giving

In North Carolina, those aged 70 and older give the highest percentage of their incomes to nonprofits in their communities. But, a higher percentage of the Baby Boom generation give. In a 2008 survey, 73 percent of Baby Boomers had given money in the past 12 months to a nonprofit, and 71 percent had given money to a place of worship. Over the next several decades, Baby Boomers will have more money to give because they will receive a great deal of wealth through bequests.

Service on Juries: Another Way of Serving

Looking around a jury room, it often seems like a disproportionate number of jurors are aged 65 and older – even though age actually provides potential jurors an excuse from jury duty in 26 states. Jurors are excused at age 65 in six states; at age 70 in 16 states; age 72 in two states, including North Carolina; and age 75 in two states. Though age is an excuse to avoid jury duty in North Carolina, it does not keep seniors from serving.

Civic Engagement Online

In September 2009, the Pew Internet and American Life Project released the results of a survey about Internet users and civic engagement. The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research obtained the raw data and analyzed the responses by generation.

Perhaps surprisingly, those aged 72 and over who use the Internet were more likely to be civically engaged online than Baby Boomers who use the Internet. The pattern continued when respondents were asked about discussing politics and public affairs with others. For those aged 72 and over, 17.3 percent discuss public affairs on the Internet at least once a week, and 8.1 percent do so every day.

The next generation of senior citizens – age 54 to 62 – are called Leading Boomers by the Pew Project. Almost 25 percent of Leading Boomers attended a political meeting on local, town, or school affairs compared to 18 percent of those aged 63-71 and 15 percent of those aged 72 and older. And, 17 percent of the Leading Boomers were active members of a group that tries to influence public policy or government, compared to 13 percent of those aged 63-71 and 6 percent of those aged 72 and older.

Volunteering

Older adults in North Carolina aged 65 and older volunteer more than most other generations, but they trail their age group nationally. While 23 percent of older adults in the state volunteered in 2008, North Carolina still ranks only 34th in the nation. The Baby Boomer volunteer rate in North Carolina was higher at 29 percent, also ranking 34th nationally. Baby Boomer volunteer rates were surpassed only by college students in North Carolina – ranked 14th with a volunteer rate of 33 percent. Nationally, 30 percent of Baby Boomers volunteer, while only 26 percent of college students volunteer.

Just over 25 percent of all North Carolinians volunteer. In 2008, 1.7 million North Carolinians volunteered with an organization, performing 221.1 million hours of service. Nationwide, 26.4 percent of all residents engaged in civic life by volunteering, attending public meetings, or working with neighbors informally to improve their communities. Of those, 36 percent volunteered with a religious organization and 27 percent in education in 2008. This represents a big change since 1989 when 49 percent volunteered with a religious organization and 12 percent volunteered in education. In North Carolina, almost 42 percent of those who volunteer do so with a religious organization.

In 2008, when 25 percent of all North Carolinians volunteered, the state ranked 35th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In terms of the average annual volunteer hours per state resident, North Carolina ranked 37th at 32 hours per year. North Carolina ranked 32nd in the percentage of volunteers who continue their service for more than one year (65 percent).

“Seniors who volunteer also give twice as much in charitable contributions – so they give back to the community in two ways,” said Jane Kendall, President of the N.C. Center for Nonprofits. “They can volunteer on their own or through programs like the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Executive Service Corps, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companions. Baby Boomers believe things can change, and they want to be part of that change.”

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, “Baby Boomers in their late 40s to mid-50s have higher volunteer rates than past generations had at the same ages.” The Center’s study suggests that state and local governments should leverage this trend toward rising civic engagement.

In December 2009, Governor Beverly Perdue re-established the N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. The Commission, first created in 1994, is charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive statewide service plan for promoting and recognizing volunteerism. “As governor,” said Perdue at the time, “I’ve asked all North Carolinians to make service a way of life.”

The Center's report on the civic contributions of seniors is part of a larger study of key issues facing the state's aging population published in the Center's journal, *North Carolina Insight*. Last year, the Center released research on the growth in the elderly population and on fraud committed against the elderly. Earlier this year, the Center released research on Medicaid and the elderly. The next part of the study will include reports on the crisis in the number of caretakers for the elderly, the impact of the growing aging population on the state budget, and the need for an aging policy plan for the future. Reports will be released as they are completed. This research on key issues facing the aging population in North Carolina is funded by grants from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust in Winston-Salem, The Hillsdale Fund of Greensboro, and Mission HealthCare Foundation of Asheville. Center members can login to the Website at www.nccppr.org to access this research.

The research on the civic contributions of seniors was featured on statewide public radio, State Government Radio, Time Warner Cable TV's statewide news channels, the statewide public television network, and 11 newspaper articles. It also was the subject of a one-hour, live call-in "Open/net" program. "Open/net" is a program produced by the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications and broadcast on 53 cable TV systems across the state.

A MAJOR NEW BENEFIT FOR CENTER MEMBERS: THE CENTER'S NEW WEBSITE

We're happy to share exciting news about new benefits for you as a Center Member. Last month, we debuted our completely new Website at www.nccppr.org. As a Member, you have access to all 34 years of our policy research. For example, you may be interested in our latest – "The Future of Community Colleges," "The History of Mental Health Reform," "Demographics of Our Growing Aging Population," "Fraud Committed Against the Elderly," or "Medicaid and the Elderly."

We also launched new membership categories, dues, and benefit structures, with the first dues increase since 1989! You can choose from four membership levels: E-Membership Basic (\$50), E-Membership Plus (\$100), Regular Membership (\$75), and Regular Membership Plus (\$300). The next page describes the benefits for each. If you already paid your membership for the year, we'll automatically move you into the comparable membership level, so you'll still receive everything you've been receiving. We're trying to do five things with these changes:

- (1) Respond to Members who tell us they now want to receive all or some products online.
- (2) Respond to Members, the media, policymakers, and the public who tell us they want to be able to search online for everything the Center has ever done in education, for example, to find out if we've ever done a study on year-round schools or on job training programs – or to look for policy data on their county.
- (3) Increase needed income. We hope you agree that keeping the same price for 21 years is amazing.
- (4) Give you free benefits that non-Members must pay for. So, for a full year, you'll get exclusive access to each new item we publish. After that year, it will be available online to the general public.
- (5) Cut printing costs and be more environmentally responsible. We'll print only limited copies of publications and then make them available on a print-on-demand basis.

We ask Center members to do three things:

- (1) **Please send your email address to Tammy Bromley at tbromley@nccppr.org** if you haven't already. We need your email address to send you a username and password so you can fully utilize our new Website.
- (2) Give us your feedback on our brand new Website at www.nccppr.org.
- (3) Renew your membership when it comes up for renewal in 2010. If you have *any* concerns or just want to talk, please let us know.

Most of all, we hope you still value the Center’s work and will continue to invest in it. In this very tough time for all nonprofits, we hope this is an organization you want to support as we transform ourselves. Some of you have been with us for one year. Some of you have been with us for all 34 years. We value each and every one of you.

Benefits You Receive	<input type="checkbox"/> E-Membership Basic \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Membership \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> E-Membership Plus \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Membership Plus \$300
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Access online to the latest <i>North Carolina Insight</i> journal	√	√	√	√
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Email invitation to Center events	√	√	√	√
Special Policy Alerts online	√	√	√	√
Copies of selected speeches or public presentations online	√	√	√	√
Online tips on navigating the legislature and becoming more effective in public policy	√	√	√	√
Access online to <i>Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature</i>			√	√
Access online to rankings of all legislators' effectiveness, attendance, and roll call voting participation			√	√
Access online to rankings of the most influential lobbyists in the legislature			√	√
Access online to in-depth, book-length research reports (such as studies of governance of public universities and student financial aid)			√	√
Printed copies of <i>North Carolina Insight</i> journal, plus access online to <i>Insight</i>		√		√
Printed copies of <i>Article II: A Guide to the N.C. Legislature</i>				√
Printed copies of rankings of legislators' effectiveness, attendance, and roll call voting participation				√
Printed copies of rankings of the most influential lobbyists in the legislature				√
Printed copies of in-depth, book-length research reports (such as studies of governance of public universities and student financial aid)				√

PREVIEW OF KEY ISSUES IN THE 2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

I. The Context – A “10-Year Election:” The political party that wins a majority gets to draw legislative districts in 2011 that will last 10 years. Current makeup of General Assembly — Senate: 30 D, 20 R; House 68 D, 52 R. This means legislators are unlikely to take up any controversial issues and will want to adjourn quickly.

II. It’s a Short Session: May 12 to July or August

Can only consider: Issues Related to Budget

Recommendations from Interim Study Committees

Bills That Have Passed One Chamber

A. Budget Issues: Another revenue shortfall. The legislature’s Fiscal Research Division estimated in April that the legislature would face an overall budget gap of about \$860 million.

The legislature is not likely to raise taxes in a “10-year election” year.

The Governor’s proposed budget cuts most agencies 5-7%; education is cut 4%.

1. Medicaid: Already \$250 million short, likely to be \$430 million short by 6/30/10
Already have made cuts by implementing a preferred drug list, cut personal care services programs, and cut provider rates
Federal extra Medicaid money (FMAP) ends 12/31, halfway through state fiscal year
The Governor’s proposed cuts in Medicaid (\$60 million) would cut dental care for adult Medicaid patients, cut in-home health care for adults, and save \$36 million by attacking Medicaid fraud.
2. Recommendations from Gov.’s BRAC (Budget Reform and Accountability Commission):
New computer software to find Medicaid fraud
Consolidate state’s IT operations
Privatize custodial services in prisons
3. Changes in formula for distributing road money: urban areas want more road money
4. No pay raises for teachers, state employees
5. UNC’s counter proposal of a 5.2% tuition increase with 51% of the proceeds to go to student financial aid vs. the legislature’s planned 6% tuition increase where all proceeds go into the General Fund

B. Recommendations from Interim Study Committees

1. Alcoholic Beverage Control – privatize all (potentially increases revenue without increasing taxes, an attractive option this year) vs. leave the system as is vs. reduce the number of local boards and allow some private retail outlets to sell
2. Whether to lift ban on hardened structures at beaches like seawalls, jetties, and terminal groins
3. Student financial aid:
Require all community colleges to offer federal loans in exchange for flexibility for colleges
Change in the composition of the State Education Assistance Authority Board
Begin to consolidate financial aid programs that are designed to address work force shortages of teachers, nurses, etc. and then consolidate need-based financial aid programs
4. Mental health oversight – The components of the state’s new strategy:
 - a. CABHAS (Critical Access Behavioral Health Agencies) large providers for local mental health services
 - b. Peer Support Specialists: people who have successfully dealt with mental illness or substance abuse will be hired to help current patients
 - c. State is buying bed space in local hospitals for patients in crisis
Mental health is heavily affected by the Medicaid budget since Medicaid is largest source of funds for mental health services in both North Carolina and the nation.

5. Further movement in the merger of Smart Start and More at 4 early childhood programs
6. Reworking of the Bill Lee Act tax credits for businesses
7. Domestic Violence:
 - Include sexual violence in the purview of the N.C. Council on Women/Domestic Violence Commission
 - Limit the liability of Domestic Violence shelters
 - Fund shelters and centers for visitation and exchange of children where domestic violence has been present in the home

C. Bills That Have Already Passed One Chamber (House or Senate) in 2009 and Thus Are Alive in 2010 (bill number and sponsor)

1. Campaign finance law changes (S 716 – Clodfelter)
2. More disclosure for gubernatorial appointees (H 944 – Glazier)
3. Close executive branch revolving door (H 1136 – Ross and Stam)
4. Pay To Play Regulation: Prohibit vendors who win state contracts from making large campaign donations (H 961 – Glazier)
5. Homeowner/homebuyer protection act (S 1015 – Stein)
6. Delineate river basins (S 833 – Clodfelter)
7. Prohibit cell phones in prison (H 8 – Pierce, Hall)
8. Reorganize schools with high dropout rates (H 1176 – Coates, Crawford, Steen, Langdon)

D. Governor’s Initiatives – see also Budget Issues section and BRAC Commission proposals above

1. Jobs, jobs, jobs measures in a state with 11% unemployment
2. Ethics reform
3. Small business initiatives, including:
 - (a) \$15 million for tax rebate to small businesses that hire workers who have been unemployed for 60+ days;
 - (b) \$250 tax credit for small businesses that provide health insurance to employees
4. More probation reform
5. Promote government transparency: \$ to State Ethics Commission and to State Board of Elections and to expand the archive of state employees’ email.
6. 6 local roundtables on issues affecting the aging in April-June and Governor’s Executive Order #54 that orders all state agencies “to develop strategies and proposals to strengthen preparedness for and response to N.C.’s aging population”

E. Seep-Down Effect from Major Federal Legislation

1. Health care reform – expands Medicaid
2. Student loans – cuts out banks’ roles in loans and affects N.C. State Education Assistance Authority
3. Federal matching percentage (FMAP) of Medicaid program dollars reverts from current but temporary 76% to 65% on 12/31/10
4. Race to the Top in education: State’s proposal is due to U.S. Dept. of Education on 6/1 in effort to get one-time federal money for education. Gov. may agree to:
 - *tie teacher evaluation to student performance on test scores
 - *raise the cap on the number of charter schools from 100: The proposal is to add a new category of charters. They would target established low-performing schools and would be run by local school districts. The Center’s two studies of charter schools have raised serious questions about charter schools’ overall lower academic performance compared to regular public schools, the number of charter schools which do not meet state requirements on racial balance (26 charters are more than 80% non-white), no transfers of educational innovations to public schools, and 27 schools that have had their charters revoked for management or financial reasons.

Special Thanks to Our Foundation and Corporate Contributors February – April 2010

It continues to be tough for nonprofits economically, so we greatly appreciate the \$7,500 in general operating support from our long-time supporter **The Warner Foundation**. We send our sincere thanks to Center Board member Betty Craven and Michael Warner.

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