



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

NEWS RELEASE

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SECOND-TERM REPUBLICANS GAIN IN NEW EFFECTIVENESS RANKINGS

With a supermajority in the state legislature, Republicans claimed the top 15 spots in both houses in the new rankings of legislators' effectiveness released today by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. President Pro Tem of the Senate Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) and Speaker of the House Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) top the rankings for the second time in a row.

The biennial effectiveness rankings are based on responses to surveys from the legislators themselves, from registered lobbyists based in Raleigh, and capital news media who regularly cover state government. The Center also released new rankings of legislators' attendance and participation in roll call votes.

"The rankings are a mirror of what happens in the legislature and who makes it happen," says the Center's director, Ran Coble. "Over the years," he adds, "the key factors in a higher effectiveness ranking are being in the majority party, how long the legislator has served, being chair of a committee, and their personal skills in moving legislation."

In the 2013-2014 legislative session, Republicans hold a supermajority in both the Senate (33-17) and the House of Representatives (77-43). This follows a shift in control from a Democratic majority in 2010 to Republican control in 2011. By 2014, 97 (57%) of the current 170 legislators were not in the legislature just four years ago.

Second-Term Republicans Make Big Gains

Republicans who were first elected in 2010 and who are serving their second term in 2013-2014 made big gains in the rankings this year. Second-term Republicans in the 50-member Senate jumped an average of 11 spots in the rankings, while second-term Republicans in the 120-member House went up an average of 27 places. Sen. Rick Gunn (R-Alamance) rose 22 places from 33rd in 2012 to 11th this year. Sen. Brent Jackson (R-Sampson) moved up 19 places to 8th in effectiveness while Sen. Bill Rabon (R-Brunswick) moved up 11 places to 7th. Both Jackson and Sen. Kathy Harrington (R-Gaston), the highest-ranked female in the Senate, were recently named Co-Chairs of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee for the 2014 session, along with Sen. Harry Brown (R-Onslow), who ranks 4th.

In the House, second-term Republican Representatives Craig Horn (R-Union) and Harry Warren (R-Rowan) each rose 46 places in effectiveness. Horn jumped from 66th to 20th and Warren from 82nd to 36th. However, the biggest jumps in the House were by Democratic Representatives Susi Hamilton (D-New Hanover), up 60 places from 102nd to 42nd, and by Larry Hall (D-Durham), up 49 places from 72nd to 23rd. Hall is the Democratic Minority Leader in the House.

Speaker Hopefuls Also Move to Top Echelon

Speaker of the House Thom Tillis is running for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate and is not seeking re-election to the state legislature, so the House will have a new leader in 2015. At least seven House members have been mentioned as possible candidates for Speaker in 2015, and all seven finished in the top 13 in effectiveness. They are:

Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland), Chair of the powerful Rules Committee, finished 2nd behind Tillis. David Lewis (R-Harnett), Co-Chair of the Finance Committee and the Elections Committee, ranks 4th, Appropriations Committee Senior Chair Nelson Dollar (R-Wake) ranks 6th, and Republican Majority Leader Edgar Starnes (R-Caldwell) ranks 8th. Public Utilities and Energy Committee Chair Mike Hager (R-Rutherford) ranks 11th, and Regulatory Reform Committee Chair Tim Moffitt (R-Buncombe) ranks 12th, followed by Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston), Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety and Chair of the Judiciary Committee, at 13th.

Highly Ranked, Regardless of Whether Their Party Is in Power

Over the years, some legislators have consistently ranked highly in effectiveness, regardless of whether their political party was in the majority or minority. Democrats held a majority in three sessions in the last 10 years, while Republicans have had a majority since 2011. Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R-Cabarrus), who ranks 12th this year, has ranked in the top 12 in every survey since 2003. In the House, Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland), who ranks 16th this year, has ranked in the top 25 since 2005. And, Rep. Paul Stam (R-Wake), who ranks 7th this year, has ranked in the top 10 since 2007.

Turnover Continues: Some of the Most Effective Legislators Will Not Return

High turnover in the legislature continues this year, even before the 2014 elections are held. At least 21 legislators who started the 2013 session will not be back in 2015. This includes some of the most effective members of the Senate and House.

Eight Senators – four Republicans and four Democrats - will not return in 2015. This includes Sen. Pete Brunstetter (R-Forsyth), who ranks 3rd in the latest rankings, but who resigned after the 2013 session to take a position with Novant Health. Senate Appropriations Committee Co-Chair Neal Hunt (R-Wake), who ranks 10th, and Thom Goolsby (R-New Hanover), who ranks 14th, both decided not to run for re-election, as did the Senate's longest-serving member, Sen. Austin Allran (R-Catawba), who has been in the Senate since 1986. Four Senate Democrats also will not return, including Minority Leader Martin Nesbitt (D-Buncombe), who died on March 6th.

Even before the 2014 elections, 13 Representatives will not return to the state House – 6 Republicans and 7 Democrats. Those not returning include highly-ranked Speaker Tillis and Republican Conference Leader Ruth Samuelson (R-Mecklenburg), who ranks 5th in effectiveness, as well as Appropriations Health and Human Services Committee Co-Chair Mark Hollo (R-Alexander), who ranks 41st. Two House members – former Representatives Jerry Dockham (R-Davidson) and Deborah Ross (D-Wake) – moved to other jobs during the 2013 session. Two House members – Representatives Jim Fulghum (R-Wake) and Andy Wells (R-Catawba) – are running for state Senate seats.

However, the May and November 2014 elections are unlikely to see as much turnover as the past two elections because redistricting has created a lot of safe seats. Eleven incumbent Senators have no opposition in either the May primary or the November general election, and 43 House incumbents also face no opposition.

Most Effective Freshmen

In the Senate, Sen. Jeff Tarte (R-Mecklenburg) ranks as the most effective freshman at 24th this year. Among freshmen in the House who were new to the legislature in 2013, Rep. Dean Arp (R-Union) and Rep. Jim Fulghum (R-Wake) rank as the highest freshmen, at 38th and 39th, respectively.

Most Effective Females and African Americans

Sen. Kathy Harrington (R-Gaston) is the highest-ranked female in the Senate at 13th. Rep. Julia Howard (R-Davie), who is serving her 13th term, is again the highest-ranked woman in the House at 3rd. Rep. Ruth Samuelson, who is not running for re-election this year, ranks 5th, moving up 13 spots.

Sen. Dan Blue (D-Wake) at 23rd and Rep. Larry Hall (D-Durham) at 23rd are the top-ranked African American legislators in the Senate and House, respectively.

Legislators with Perfect Attendance

This marks the seventh time the Center has tabulated rankings of attendance and roll call voting participation, using official records from the N.C. General Assembly. Six Senators had perfect attendance: Chad Barefoot (R-Wake), Ben Clark (D-Hoke), Floyd McKissick Jr. (D-Durham), Shirley Randleman (R-Wilkes), Norm Sanderson (R-Pamlico), and Jeff Tarte (R-Mecklenburg). In the House, 21 members had 100 percent attendance. Rep. Nelson Dollar (R-Wake) had perfect attendance for the third consecutive session, while Rep. Mickey Michaux (D-Durham) missed one day, his first absence in six sessions.

The Center praised the dedication of most legislators in attending the session last year. Forty-three of 49* Senators and 102 of 120 Representatives attended more than 90 percent of the days in session. Center director Ran Coble says, "For part-time legislators – many with other jobs back home and often long drives to Raleigh – this attendance record is a significant accomplishment."

Legislators with Perfect Roll Call Voting Participation

Two Senators voted in all 916 recorded Senate votes with no absences or excuses from voting – Sen. Ben Clark and Sen. Shirley Randleman. All 49 Senators included in the rankings had voting participation percentages over 95 percent.

Only one Representative voted in all 1,354 electronically-recorded roll call votes with no absences or excuses from voting – Rep. Nelson Dollar. Dollar has participated in every vote for five consecutive sessions.

Five Different Measures of Legislators' Performance

Center director Coble says that the N.C. Center compiles the three sets of rankings to give citizens different ways to evaluate the performance of their legislators. "The rankings of attendance and voting participation tell citizens how often their legislator was there to represent them," he says. "The effectiveness rankings tell citizens how effective their legislator was when he or she was there."

In odd-numbered years, the Center publishes additional evaluations of legislative performance. *Article II: A Citizen's Guide to the Legislature* includes data on how many bills each legislator introduced and

*Sen. Martin Nesbitt died on March 6, 2014 and is not included in the rankings

how many of those 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 a total of five different measures of legislators' performance: effectiveness, attendance, voting participation, success in getting bills passed, and votes on the most significant bills of the 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 specific fields. The survey respondents also are asked to consider the respect 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 19th time the Center has undertaken this comprehensive survey. The first edition evaluated the performance of the 1977-78 General Assembly. The response rate to the survey continues to be very high. Sixty-three of the 120 House members (53 percent) responded to the Center's survey, as did 33 (66 percent) of the 49 Senators, 159 of the 438 registered lobbyists who regularly work in the legislature and are based in North Carolina (36 percent), and 6 of 36 capital news correspondents (17 percent) – all well above accepted standards of statistical validity. The overall response rate was 40 percent, the same as in 2012 and 2010.

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."

About the Center

The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization created in 1977 to evaluate state government programs and study important public policy issues facing North Carolina. The Center does *not* endorse candidates. The Center is supported by grants from 10 private foundations, 100 corporate contributors, and about 400 individual and organizational members. The Center publishes a journal called *North Carolina Insight* and in-depth research reports, including a recent study of telepsychiatry as a way to deliver mental health services in rural areas.

The Center also has conducted in-depth studies on fraud committed against the elderly and key issues facing the state's community colleges. An upcoming study will examine state tuition and financial aid policy in public universities, including how to increase NC's college-going and college completion rates.

Printed copies of the new effectiveness rankings are available from the Center for \$10. You also may order an entire set of publications for \$40 – including *Article II: A Citizen's Guide to the 2013-2014 N.C. Legislature*, the effectiveness rankings, and rankings of the most influential lobbyists (to be released in August). To order just the printed rankings booklet, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, email Tammy Bromley at tbromley@nccppr.org or visit the Center's Website at www.nccppr.org.

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