



## Latest Legislative Effectiveness Rankings Reflect GOP Gains

by Jack Betts

The same election that put Republican George Bush in the White House and gave North Carolina a Republican governor and lieutenant governor for the first time has had a dramatic and continuing impact upon the state House of Representatives — and on the 1990 legislative effectiveness rankings published by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. Like ripples on a pond, the effects of that election — when 46 Republicans won election to the House for the GOP's high-water mark in the 20th century — continue to rock the political boat in North Carolina and to shake up the Democratic Party's dominance in the rankings and in the General Assembly.

Released on April 4, 1990, the new rankings reflect the fundamental changes brought about by the deposal of long-time House Speaker Liston Ramsey (D-Madison) in January 1989 and the election of Rep. Joe Mavretic (D-Edgecombe) as speaker with the help of a coalition of 20 dissident Democrats and 46 Republican legislators — including 10 new Republicans in the 1989 House.

Consider the list of firsts in the 1990 rankings:

■ A rank-and-file legislator — Rep. David Diamont (D-Surry) — ranked first in the survey in the House. Diamont is chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

■ The speaker of the House, Mavretic, ranked second in the survey — another first. In all previous surveys dating to 1978, the speaker had finished first.

■ A Republican legislator — minority leader Johnathan Rhyne (R-Lincoln) — broke into the

top 10 in the House. The previous high survey ranking for a House Republican came in 1988, when then-Rep. Betsy Cochrane (R-Davie) ranked 16th of 120 House members.

■ Republicans generally made significant gains. All but three of the 36 House and Senate Republicans with legislative service prior to the 1989 session moved up in this year's rankings.

■ Among freshmen legislators, Republicans clearly were the leaders. Six of the top 10 freshmen legislators in the House were Republicans. In fact, Republicans dominated the freshman class in raw numbers. Of the 26 first-termers in the House, only six were Democrats.

■ And the biggest gainer of all in the House was a Republican. Rep. Harry Grimmer, a second-term member from Mecklenburg, jumped from a tie for 98th to 29th — a leap of 69 places. In fact, nine of the 10 legislators with the biggest increases in rankings in the House were Republicans.

"Clearly, Republicans have taken their place as players at the poker table," says Lori Ann Harris, a Center policy analyst and, along with Kim Kebschull, co-author of the biennial survey. "In the past, Republican representatives have been part of the loyal opposition, but in 1990 they were part of a ruling majority in the House," Harris adds.

Ran Coble, the Center's executive director, notes that the House changes came about because of the Mavretic coalition's decision to share the

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power. "A key promise in Mavretic's bid to become speaker was the guarantee of a number of subcommittee chairmanships to Republicans," says Coble. "For the first time, 23 Republicans had a chance to chair committees or subcommittees in the House. As a result, all but three of the 29 Republicans who have served more than one term in the House moved up in the rankings."

## Blacks, Women Don't Fare As Well

While Republicans were making major gains in influence in the House, blacks and women made only modest advances in effectiveness. Reps. Dan Blue (D-Wake) and Mickey Michaux (D-Durham) retained their 1987 rankings of sixth and 15th in the House, and Reps. Toby Fitch (D-Wilson) and Thomas Hardaway (D-Halifax) took giant steps up in the rankings. Fitch jumped 33 places in the rankings, and Hardaway soared 43 places. But overall, only three of 12 blacks who had previous legislative service moved up.

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Women legislators did a little better. In the House, the highest-ranked woman was Democrat Sharon Thompson of Durham, who at 16th had moved up 31 places. (Women have previously ranked in the top 10. Wake Democrat Ruth Cook, now an N.C. Utilities Commissioner, ranked 10th in the 1981 survey.) Second among House women was Republican Ann Duncan of Forsyth, who jumped up 53 places to 19th. Of the 17 women who served previously in the House, 11 moved up in the rankings. In the Senate, three women with prior legislative experience moved up, but their gains were modest.

While the 1989 House rankings showed Thompson and Duncan doing well, there may well

be a leadership void in future sessions because neither Thompson nor Duncan will be back in 1991. Thompson has decided not to run again, citing time constraints and financial considerations, while Duncan resigned after the 1989 session to join the executive branch. The third-highest-ranking woman in the House was Rep. Anne Barnes (D-Orange), at 21st.

## The Kennel Club Effect

What made the House rankings doubly interesting in 1990 was the mix of Democrats and Republicans and especially of voting factions. The House top 10 included Diamont, first; Mavretic, second; George Miller (D-Durham), third; Rhyne, fourth; Harry Payne (D-New Hanover), fifth; Blue, sixth; Dennis Wicker (D-Lee), seventh; Sam Hunt (D-Alamance), eighth; Joe Hackney (D-Orange), ninth; and Robert Hunter (D-McDowell), 10th. Close behind at 11th was former Speaker Ramsey. In all, only four of the House top 10 in 1988 were back in the top group in 1990 — Miller, Blue, Hackney and Wicker.

Five of the 1990 top 10 were part of the faction that put Mavretic into office — Diamont, Mavretic himself, Payne, Rhyne, and Hunt. The other five — Miller, Blue, Wicker, Hackney, and Hunter—had remained loyal to Ramsey, but despite having supported the losing candidate for speaker, all retained influence with their peers. In fact, among the top 10 are several potential candidates for speaker, in 1991 or future years, who might challenge Mavretic. The list includes Diamont, a Mavretic ally who remained on good terms with Ramsey Democrats — nicknamed the Kennel Club because they were in Mavretic's political doghouse; Miller, the highest-ranking Kennel Clubber; Wicker, the House majority leader who frequently clashed publicly with Mavretic over party matters, and Blue, Hackney and Hunter, who also opposed the Mavretic coalition on certain Democratic Party questions and on a number of substantive issues.

Wicker said the rankings showed that Democrats loyal to Ramsey still were effective despite the clash with Mavretic's ruling faction. "For those of us who were stripped of position and relegated to freshman status in the House, it showed we still were able to maintain the respect and esteem of our colleagues and to remain effective members of the General Assembly," says Wicker, who nonetheless was majority leader as well as chairman of an important subcommittee,

**Table 1. Effectiveness Rankings of the Top 40 Members of the 1989 N.C. House of Representatives**

Name of Representative	Effectiveness Ranking in 1989	Previous Effectiveness Rankings (Where Applicable)					
		1987	1985	1983	1981	1979	1977
DIAMONT, DAVID H. (D-Surry)	1	18	16 (tie)	18 (tie)	39	23 (tie)	50 (tie)
MAVRETIC, JOSEPHUS L. (D-Edgecombe)	2	13	18	18 (tie)	64	NA	NA
MILLER, GEORGE W., JR. (D-Durham)	3	4	4	4	4	9	5 (tie)
RHYNE, JOHNATHAN L., JR. (R-Lincoln)	4	69	82 (tie)	NA	NA	NA	NA
PAYNE, HARRY E., JR. (D-New Hanover)	5	12	14	28	69 (tie)	NA	NA
BLUE, DANIEL T., JR. (D-Wake)	6	6	7	8	30	NA	NA
WICKER, DENNIS A. (D-Lee)	7	9	15	24	48	NA	NA
HUNT, R. SAMUEL, III (D-Alamance)	8	43	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
HACKNEY, JOE (D-Orange)	9	7	10	15	60	NA	NA
HUNTER, ROBERT C. (D-McDowell)	10	11	20	25	56	NA	NA
RAMSEY, LISTON B. (D-Madison)	11	1	1	1	1	3	2
NESBITT, MARTIN L., JR. (D-Buncombe)	12	5	13	21 (tie)	65	NA	NA
COOPER, ROY A., III (D-Nash)	13	45	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
HALL, ALEXANDER M. (D-New Hanover)	14	21	75	NA	NA	NA	NA
MICHAUX, H. M., JR. (D-Durham)	15	15	24	NA	NA	NA	NA
THOMPSON, SHARON A. (D-Durham)	16	47	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
DeVANE, DANIEL H. (D-Hoke)	17	27	50	100	NA	NA	NA
REDWINE, E. DAVID (D-Brunswick)	18	28	44	NA	NA	NA	NA
DUNCAN, ANN Q. <sup>1</sup> (R-Forsyth)	19	72	86	NA	NA	NA	NA
WATKINS, WILLIAM T. <sup>2</sup> (D-Granville)	20	2	2	3	2	20	12 (tie)

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<sup>1</sup> Rep. Duncan resigned following the 1989 session to join the Martin administration.

<sup>2</sup> Rep. Watkins died on Aug. 26, 1989.

**Table 1. Effectiveness Rankings of the Top 40 Members of the  
1989 N.C. House of Representatives, *continued***

Name of Representative	Effectiveness Ranking in 1989	Previous Effectiveness Rankings (Where Applicable)					
		1987	1985	1983	1981	1979	1977
BARNES, ANNE C. (D-Orange)	21	20	28 (tie)	49	NA	NA	NA
CRAWFORD, JAMES W., JR. (D-Granville)	22	36	33 (tie)	85 (tie)	NA	NA	NA
FITCH, MILTON F., JR. (D-Wilson)	23	56 (tie)	79	NA	NA	NA	NA
KERR, JOHN H., III (D-Wayne)	24	62	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
LILLEY, DANIEL T. (D-Lenoir)	25	14	11	9	8	12 (tie)	24 (tie)
CROMER, CHARLES L. (R-Davidson)	26	80 (tie)	105 (tie)	NA	NA	NA	NA
HASTY, JOHN CALVIN (D-Robeson)	27	51	66	105	NA	NA	NA
PRIVETTE, COY C. (R-Cabarrus)	28	34	63	NA	NA	NA	NA
GRIMMER, HARRY C. (R-Mecklenburg)	29	98 (tie)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
COLTON, MARIE WATTERS (D-Buncombe)	30	26	31 (tie)	64	66	94 (tie)	NA
LOCKS, SIDNEY A. (D-Robeson)	31	25	47	68 (tie)	NA	NA	NA
LINEBERRY, ALBERT S., SR. (D-Guilford)	32 (tie)	29	71	NA	NA	NA	NA
ETHRIDGE, W. BRUCE (D-Carteret)	32 (tie)	24	26 (tie)	33	67	78 (tie)	NA
ROBINSON, GEORGE S. (R-Caldwell)	34	NA	70	95	101	NA	NA
BRUBAKER, HAROLD J. (R-Randolph)	35	50	39 (tie)	56 (tie)	57 (tie)	85 (tie)	99 (tie)
HUNT, JOHN J. (D-Cleveland)	36	8	12	12 (tie)	12	57 (tie)	NA
BEARD, R. D. (D-Cumberland)	37	40	58 (tie)	54	69 (tie)	68 (tie)	79 (tie)
JAMES, VERNON G. (D-Pasquotank)	38	16 (tie)	19	17	23	32 (tie)	37 (tie)
HARDAWAY, THOMAS C. (D-Halifax)	39 (tie)	82	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
HOLMES, GEORGE M. (R-Yadkin)	39 (tie)	68	67	101	92	100 (tie)	NA

the House Infrastructure Subcommittee on Solid Waste. High rankings in the House are very much a product of the position held, Wicker says, and Republicans' standing with Speaker Mavretic was a major reason for their success. "A substantial reason they moved up is simply because they held leadership positions under the current speaker," adds Wicker.

Those who supported Mavretic's bid took a chance, but generally it paid off well. Members of the coalition supporting Mavretic got a committee or subcommittee chairmanship, and 15 of the 20 dissident Democrats — 75 percent — who voted with Republicans for Mavretic moved up in the rankings. Only two of the 20 Mavretic Democrats fell in the rankings. Among the prime beneficiaries were Diamont, who moved from 18th to first; Mavretic himself, who went from 13th to second; Payne, who went from 12th to fifth; and Sam Hunt, who moved from 43rd to eighth.

On the other hand, membership in the Kennel Club was not the death knell one might expect. Of the 48 Democrats who stayed loyal to Ramsey, 32 went down in influence — but 14 Democrats went up and two remained the same. Among the Kennel Clubbers who moved up were Fitch, who as majority whip went from a tie for 56th to 23rd; Hardaway, who went from 82nd to a tie for 39th; John Kerr (D-Wayne), who moved from 62nd to 24th; Beverly Perdue (D-Craven), who went from a tie for 70th to 44th; David Redwine (D-Brunswick), who went from 28th to 18th; and Thompson, who went from 47th to 16th. In other words, a vote for Ramsey was not necessarily an act of political hari-kiri for a third of those in the club.

## Changes in the Senate

While the House of Representatives captured most of the attention, changes were taking place in the 50-member state Senate as well. As usual, Sen. Kenneth Royall (D-Durham) ranked first, just as he has in all previous surveys. And for the second time in a row, Sen. Marshall Rauch (D-Gaston) ranked second. In third place was Senate President Pro Tempore Henson Barnes (D-Wayne), who gained new powers (to appoint committee members and chairmen and to assign bills to committees) in the 1989 session as GOP Lt. Gov. Jim Gardner became the first Republican to preside over the Senate in this century.<sup>1</sup> The lieutenant governor is not a member of the Senate,

and thus is not included in the survey.

As president pro tem, Barnes is the top official in the Senate, but his ranking of third may come as some comfort to Speaker Mavretic, the top officer in the House. Neither ranked first in effectiveness, but both men moved up — Barnes to third from fifth in 1988, and Mavretic to second from 13th in 1988.

But the top 10 in the Senate reflect changes there, too, as several veteran senators did not run for re-election or were defeated. With no coup d'état in the Senate, Republicans did not crack the top 10. Rounding out the Senate leaders were Marc Basnight (D-Dare), fourth; Dennis Winner (D-Buncombe), fifth; William Goldston (D-Rockingham), sixth; George Daniel (D-Caswell), seventh (Daniel made the biggest advance in the Senate, having been ranked 32nd in 1987); James Ezzell (D-Nash), eighth; Robert Swain (D-Buncombe), ninth; and Ted Kaplan (D-Forsyth), 10th. In all, only three of the Senate top 10 in 1988 were back in that group in 1990 — Royall, Rauch, and Barnes.

## Urban Delegations Lack Clout

The survey rankings were not particularly good news for the urban delegations in the state. The most populous area of the state, the Piedmont, has never had a consistently large amount of clout in the N.C. General Assembly, with isolated exceptions (Durham, for one, and Wake in the early 1980s when former Rep. Al Adams ranked second, Cook 10th, and Blue 30th). The 1990 survey results show that the state's four most populous counties, which frequently send new legislators to Raleigh, have not been able to build powerful delegations. Mecklenburg, Guilford, Wake, and Forsyth counties have not done well in recent years. In 1990, Mecklenburg's highest-ranked House and Senate members were 29th and 15th, respectively; Mecklenburg's House delegation had an average ranking of 71st and its Senate delegation an average ranking of 30th. Guilford's highest-ranked legislators were 32nd and 26th; Guilford's average ranking was 87th in the House and 38th in the Senate. Forsyth's highest-ranked legislators were marginally better at 19th and 10th; Forsyth's average ranking was 77th in the House and 12th in the Senate. Wake's top legislators were 6th in the House and 18th in the Senate; Wake's average ranking was 56th in the House and 28th in the Senate.

**Table 2. Effectiveness Rankings of the Top 15 Members  
of the 1989 N.C. Senate**

Name of Senator	Effectiveness Ranking in		Previous Effectiveness Rankings (Where Applicable)				
	1989	1987	1985	1983	1981	1979	1977
ROYALL, KENNETH C., JR. (D-Durham)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
RAUCH, MARSHALL A. (D-Gaston)	2	2	2	3	4	3	6 (tie)
BARNES, HENSON P. (D-Wayne)	3	5	6	5	7	7 (tie)	27
BASNIGHT, MARC (D-Dare)	4	16	34	NA	NA	NA	NA
WINNER, DENNIS J. (D-Buncombe)	5	12	16	30	NA	NA	NA
GOLDSTON, WILLIAM D., JR. (D-Rockingham)	6	15	38	NA	NA	NA	NA
DANIEL, GEORGE B. (D-Caswell)	7	32	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
EZZELL, JAMES E., JR. (D-Nash)	8	17	27	NA	NA	(12 tie)*	(24 tie)*
SWAIN, ROBERT S. (D-Buncombe)	9	13	12	10	12	16 (tie)	33 (tie)
KAPLAN, TED (D-Forsyth)	10	19	29	NA	(57 tie)*	(32 tie)*	(43 tie)*
SOLES, R. C., JR. (D-Columbus)	11	10	10	17	14	25 (tie)	24 (tie)
WALKER, RUSSELL G. (D-Randolph)	12	8	11	9	9	13	17 (tie)
WARD, MARVIN (D-Forsyth)	13	14	17	27	32	39 (tie)	NA
PLYLER, AARON W. (D-Union)	14	4	3 (tie)	25	(18)*	(28 tie)*	(30 tie)*
COBB, LAURENCE A. <sup>1</sup> (R-Mecklenburg)	15	31	35 (tie)	NA	NA	NA	NA

<sup>1</sup>Sen. Cobb was appointed to the N.C. Utilities Commission on Aug. 14, 1989.

\*Parentheses around ranking and accompanying asterisk indicates effectiveness ranking while in the N.C. House of Representatives.

The urban exceptions are Durham and Buncombe counties. Durham's highest-ranked members were third in the House and first in the Senate; while Buncombe's best were 12th and fifth.

The reasons for the general lack of urban clout are fairly clear. Rural areas of the state, particularly the east where legislators tend to build seniority by winning re-election time after time, often produce more powerful legislators in influence if not in raw numbers. Rural areas do not have much competition for incumbents and therefore do not have much turnover in legislative seats. Urban areas, on the other hand, have competitive elections with frequent turnover of legislators. Thus, urban legislators do not serve long enough to build significant seniority, a key factor in legislative effectiveness. In urban areas like Durham where experienced legislators are able to win re-election consistently, effectiveness ratings are high.

"What this indicates is that while the urban areas have highly competitive elections with frequent changes, their constituents may not necessarily benefit from all those changes," notes Keschull, the co-author of the survey. "On the one hand, new blood and fresh ideas are helpful to the legislature; on the other hand, inexperience and lack of background may hamper the legislative process."

### Some Are Pleased, Some Are Not

In the rankings released this spring, some legislators were pleased and others were not. Reporters asked Mavretic, for instance, if he were disappointed that he was the first speaker who failed to finish in first place. "I'm particularly pleased that David Diamont came out number one," Mavretic told *The Charlotte Observer*. "Do you think David Diamont would be number one if Liston Ramsey had still been speaker?"

Rhyme, the highest-ranked Republican ever in the series, said he believed the rankings were "more of a power rating which reflects a person's position in the House, and that can fluctuate, depending on the next election." Rhyme said it was obvious that the coup in the House had helped him. "As a Republican, if I'm not the minority leader and if we don't have a coalition, I don't expect to be fourth again next year," notes Rhyme. "On the other hand, if we pick up 60 votes, I'm speaker of the House and I expect to be in the top five."

But Rep. Steve Arnold, who finished 120th in

the House, told the *Greensboro News & Record* he considered it a "badge of honor." He added, "Out of the 120 members, I did the least amount of boot polishing. It's a popularity poll. The taxpayers are who I came to Raleigh to advocate for, not the establishment." Arnold is not running for re-election to the House.

### Center Survey One of Few in U.S.

North Carolina is one of several states in the nation whose legislators are ranked on the basis of their effectiveness at their work. In Virginia, legislators are ranked by *The Virginian-Pilot*, a Norfolk newspaper, in a survey similar to the N.C. Center's. On the west coast, *The California Journal* magazine conducts a survey that asks respondents to make judgments not only on a legislator's effectiveness, but also on intelligence and conviviality. In Colorado, *The Denver Post* has been ranking legislators on effectiveness since 1977; *The Arizona Republic*, a Phoenix newspaper, has ranked legislators since 1986; the *Columbus Monthly*, an Ohio magazine, has ranked lawmakers since 1978; the *Texas Monthly* has rated legislators since 1972; and the *Star-Tribune* in Casper, Wyoming began a ranking system in 1988.

The N.C. Center has conducted the surveys on effectiveness rankings for legislators following each regular session of the General Assembly since 1977, and has released the results of the surveys in even-numbered years. The survey is conducted in part to meet the Center's goal of evaluating the performance of the N.C. General Assembly, assessing its effectiveness, and getting more information to the voters about their elected officials. Legislators, lobbyists who work regularly in the General Assembly, and reporters who cover the assembly daily are asked to rate each legislator on a 1-10 scale for their effectiveness.

Each year since the survey began, the response rate has grown, and the 1990 ranking saw the highest return for legislators themselves. Of the 120 House members, 108 responded, for a 91 percent rate of return, while of the 50 Senators, 42 responded, for an 84 percent return rate. Of the 274 registered lobbyists surveyed,<sup>2</sup> 141 (51 percent) returned their survey, and 21 of the 42 capital press corps members responded (a 50 percent return). That is an overall response rate of 64 percent — nearly two-thirds of those surveyed. "This level of participation indicates a strong conviction that the survey is a valid measure of

### Table 3. Highlights of the 1989 Legislative Effectiveness Rankings

#### Highest Rank

House: David H. Diamont (D-Surry) — Chairman, Appropriations

Senate: Kenneth C. Royall, Jr. (D-Durham) — Deputy President Pro Tempore and Chairman, Appropriations

#### Lowest Rank

House: Stephen G. Arnold (R-Guilford)

Senate: Charles W. Hardin (R-Haywood)

#### Biggest Increase in Influence

House: Harry C. Grimmer (R-Mecklenburg) — from 98(tie) to 29 — 69 places

Senate: George B. Daniel (D-Caswell) — from 32 to 7 — 25 places

#### Biggest Decline in Influence

House: Peggy Stamey (D-Wake) — from 42 to 77 — 35 places

Charles M. Beall (D-Haywood) — from 31 to 64(tie) — 33 places

Senate: Aaron W. Plyler (D-Union) — from 4 to 14 — 10 places

Thomas F. Taft (D-Pitt) — from 22 to 32 — 10 places

#### Highest Ranking Blacks

House: Daniel T. Blue, Jr. (D-Wake)—6th of 120

Senate: William N. Martin (D-Guilford)—26th of 50

#### Highest Ranking Women

House: Sharon A. Thompson (D-Durham)—16th of 120

Senate: Helen Rhyne Marvin (D-Gaston)—19th of 50

#### Highest Ranking Freshmen

House: George S. Robinson (R-Caldwell) — served in House 1981-1986 (34th)

Paul S. Stam, Jr. (R-Wake) (42nd)

Senate: Wendell H. Murphy (D-Duplin) — served in House 1983-1988 (23rd)

T.L. "Fountain" Odom (D-Mecklenburg) (41st)

legislative effectiveness," says Coble.

Copies of the legislative effectiveness rankings for 1990 are available from the Center for \$5 — \$4.20 plus 80 cents for postage and handling — by calling (919) 832-2839 or writing the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C. 27602. *Article II*, the 1989-90 edition of the Center's biennial guide to the legislature, which contains all previous effectiveness rankings of current members of the N.C. General Assembly plus extensive data on committees, voting records, and the demographics of legislators' race, sex, and occupation, is available for \$21 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling. The

1990 rankings will be published in the 1991-92 edition of *Article II*. □□

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For more on the duties of the lieutenant governor, see Ran Coble, "The Lieutenant Governorship in North Carolina: An Office in Transition," *North Carolina Insight*, Vol. 11, No. 2-3, April 1989, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Far more lobbyists (739 lobbyists representing 418 corporations and 27 state agencies) are actually registered with the secretary of state's office, but the Center sends surveys only to those who regularly work in the General Assembly and who are based in North Carolina. The secretary of state also registers each lobbyist anew for each client the lobbyist has, so many lobbyists are listed more than once. Each lobbyist surveyed may complete only one survey.