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# *In the Legislature*

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## **Second-Term Republicans Gain in New Effectiveness Rankings**

By Paige Worsham and Ran Coble

**W**ith a supermajority in the state legislature, Republicans claimed the top 15 spots in both houses in the rankings of legislators' effectiveness 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 rankings are a mirror of what happens in the legislature and who makes it happen. Over the years, 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.



*Sen. Phil Berger*

*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.*

*Rep. Thom Tillis*



### **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 33<sup>rd</sup> in 2012 to 11<sup>th</sup> this year. Sen. Brent Jackson (R-Sampson) moved up 19 places to 8<sup>th</sup> in effectiveness, while Sen. Bill Rabon (R-Brunswick) moved up 11 places to 7<sup>th</sup>. Both Jackson and Sen. Kathy Harrington (R-Gaston), the highest-ranked female in the Senate, were named Co-Chairs of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee for the 2014 session, along with Sen. Harry Brown (R-Onslow), who ranks 4<sup>th</sup>.

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 66<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> and Warren from 82<sup>nd</sup> to 36<sup>th</sup>. However, the biggest jumps in the House were by Democratic Representatives Susi Hamilton (D-New Hanover), up 60 places from 102<sup>nd</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup>, and by Larry Hall (D-Durham), up 49 places from 72<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>. Hall is the Democratic Minority Leader in the House.

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## Speaker Hopefuls Also Move to Top Echelon

Speaker of the House Thom Tillis is the Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate in the November elections 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 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Tillis; David Lewis (R-Harnett), Co-Chair of the Finance Committee and the Elections Committee, ranks 4<sup>th</sup>; Appropriations Committee Senior Chair Nelson Dollar (R-Wake) ranks 6<sup>th</sup>; and Republican Majority Leader Edgar Starnes (R-Caldwell) ranks 8<sup>th</sup>; Public Utilities and Energy Committee Chair Mike Hager (R-Rutherford) ranks 11<sup>th</sup>; and Regulatory Reform Committee Chair Tim Moffitt (R-Buncombe) ranks 12<sup>th</sup>; followed by Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston), Co-Chair of the Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety and Chair of the Judiciary Committee, at 13<sup>th</sup>.



*Sen. Kathy Harrington (R-Gaston) is the highest ranked female in the Senate.*

## 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 12<sup>th</sup> this year, has ranked in the top 12 in every survey since 2003. In the House, Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland), who ranks 16<sup>th</sup> this year, has ranked in the top 25 since 2005. And, Rep. Paul Stam (R-Wake), who ranks 7<sup>th</sup> this year, has ranked in the top 10 since 2007.



*Rep. Susi Hamilton (D-New Hanover), jumped up 60 places from 102<sup>nd</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup>.*

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup>, and Thom Goolsby (R-New Hanover), who ranks 14<sup>th</sup>, 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 6<sup>th</sup>.

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 5<sup>th</sup> in effectiveness, as well as Appropriations Health and Human Services Committee Co-Chair Mark Hollo (R-Alexander), who ranks 41<sup>st</sup>. 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. In July 2014, Fulghum announced he had cancer and was withdrawing from his Senate race. He passed away on July 20, 2014.

However, the 2014 elections are unlikely to see as much turnover as the past two elections because redistricting has created a lot of safe seats. Eighteen incumbent

Senators have no opposition in the November general election, and 52 House incumbents also face no opposition.

### Most Effective Freshmen

In the Senate, Sen. Jeff Tarte (R-Mecklenburg) ranks as the most effective freshman at 24<sup>th</sup> 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 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

### Most Effective Females and African Americans

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

Sen. Dan Blue (D-Wake) at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Rep. Larry Hall (D-Durham) at 23<sup>rd</sup> 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. 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

The 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. 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 how many of those he or she got passed.



*Sen. Dan Blue*

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

*Rep. Larry Hall*



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 19<sup>th</sup> 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. 🏠

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