THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE LAWMAKING

2020 to 2021 Annual Report

VISION

We envision a Congress comprised of effective lawmakers, strong institutional capacity, and the incentive structure needed to address America's greatest public policy challenges.

MISSION

We advance the generation, communication, and use of new knowledge about the effectiveness of individual lawmakers and U.S. legislative institutions.

Center for
Effective
Lawmaking

VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY

UVA BATTEN

FROM CRAIG & ALAN

Thank you so much for your interest in and support of the Center for Effective Lawmaking. This year we've grown to appreciate – more than ever – the values of community and opportunity. During difficult times, it is so important to recognize the strength of a community with common goals and values, and to seek out opportunities that truly only arise through overcoming challenges.

Community: With the ongoing pandemic, we all have felt disconnected from our usual communities and routines. But, for the Center, we've come to realize how much our community exists and thrives despite being at a distance. Our faculty affiliates, for example, are located at more than a dozen colleges, universities, and think tanks. Our partner organizations – while somewhat clustered in D.C. – are spread across numerous communities and states. And our new work, focused on lawmaking effectiveness in state legislatures, is taking us increasingly all across the country. And yet, our sense of common purpose helps us feel deeply connected as part of a far-flung, but tight-knit, community that is focused on good governance.

Opportunity: Doing so much remote work over the past year initially felt like it might diminish our opportunities to grow and connect with others. As it turns out, we joined so many of you in quickly adapting to the new environment. We found that meetings and events – while certainly not the same online – were more accessible and easier to arrange in many cases. We launched our "Conversations with Effective Lawmakers" series of video interviews. We piloted our "Office Hours" program, to consult with legislative staff of members of Congress who continue to raise the bar of effective lawmaking. And events with our partners at the Congressional Management Foundation, the Brookings Institution, the Bipartisan Policy Center, and many others were well-attended and well-received. Of course, challenges remained. We were excited to promote our "New Members Guide" for the 117th Congress and to release our "Legislative Effectiveness Scores" for the 116th Congress. But we would have loved to present those materials in person, through events and meetings. We are also looking forward to getting back on track with our in-person research conferences (two planned for this coming year!). On the whole, however, we come out of the past year stronger than ever, with a better perspective of what is possible – in-person, online, and working together as a community. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to count you as part of the CEL community. And we look forward to many more opportunities to work with you in the coming year. Thanks for your continued support!

All the very best, Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman, CEL Co-Directors

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

This was a banner year for the Center for Effective Lawmaking, despite a public landscape that moved everything online and virtual. While we continued to navigate the unique situation, we found we were still able to influence discussions around effective lawmaking in a relevant manner.

At the conclusion of the 116th Congress, we updated and released our Legislative Effectiveness Scores for the House and Senate. The scores were immediately engaged with by a variety of lawmakers and news agencies, and there was much attention paid to these data!

Building on our previously published scholarship, we also calculated issue-specific scores for all members of the House and Senate, extending back to 1973; and we released these issue area legislative effectiveness scores to the public in March 2021. We continue to look forward to facilitating future discussions about the lessons learned from analyzing these scores.

We also completed the coding and construction of State Legislative Effectiveness Scores, which capture state legislators' lawmaking activities over recent decades in 97 state legislative chambers (all except Kansas). We've already embarked on some partnerships to bring these research findings to those engaged with lawmaking processes at the state level.

In addition, we also created our New Member Guide, which was sent to all newly-elected members of the 117th Congress. Drawing on our published research as a backbone, we created worksheets to facilitate agenda-setting and concrete recommendations on how best to manage a congressional office to influence lawmaking effectiveness.

While these exciting new research outputs were published and shared, we continued to pursue new scholarly work; and we look forward to sharing the results of those projects in the upcoming years. Altogether, it has been rewarding to see our work impact public dialogue in such a powerful way, and to steward the upcoming body of scholarship that we know will be just as influential.

$15,000
in grants
awarded

1
post-doctoral
researcher

1
graduate
associate

7
works
published

23
faculty affiliates
at **17** institutions

32
active research
projects

9
research
assistants

SMALL GRANT PROGRAM

In September 2020, the CEL awarded grants to eight ground-breaking projects by scholars across the country. A total of $15,000 was pledged to support research by both established and fresh voices in the field of effective lawmaking. The projects included topics such as "Black Disfranchisement and the Effectiveness of Southern State Lawmakers," "The Durable Agenda: Tracking Bill Fates over Time," and "Fundraising and Legislating in the U.S. Congress."

We were also able to fund new scholarship that extended lawmaking effectiveness research to the U.S. states and to Brazil. We continue to support the growing community of scholars who study legislative effectiveness, and we look forward to expanding our working paper library to reflect these dynamic new additions to the field.

The Center for Effective Lawmaking's research team has developed three areas of focus for our research activities:

identification of the characteristics of those who would likely become effective lawmakers once elected;

cultivation of effective lawmakers and institutional structures within Congress;

and *accountability* of legislators for their lawmaking effectiveness.

RESEARCH RELEASED THIS YEAR

1. Crosson, Jesse M. (CEL grant recipient), Alexander C. Furnas, and Geoffrey M. Lorenz (CEL faculty affiliate). 2020. "Polarized Pluralism: Organizational Preferences and Biases in the American Pressure System," *American Political Science Review*.

2. Crosson, Jesse M. (CEL grant recipient), Geoffrey M. Lorenz (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. 2020. "How Experienced Legislative Staff Contribute to Effective Lawmaking," in *Congress Overwhelmed: The Decline of Congressional Capacity and the Prospects for Reform*, University of Chicago Press.

3. McGee, Zachary A., and Philip Moniz (CEL grant recipients). 2021. "Gift Travel in the U.S. House of Representatives," *Political Research Quarterly*.

RESEARCH RELEASED THIS YEAR CONTINUED

4. Ritchie, Melinda, and Hye Young You (CEL faculty affiliate), (CEL grant recipients). 2021. "Women's Advancement in Politics: Evidence from Congressional Staff," *Journal of Politics*.

5. Volden, Craig, and Alan E. Wiseman. 2021. "Being an Effective Lawmaker from Day One," CEL publication, presented to all new members of the 117th Congress.

6. Volden, Craig, and Alan E. Wiseman. 2021. "Party, Ideology, and Legislative Effectiveness in the U.S. Senate" in Lawrence C. Dodd, C. Lawrence Evans, and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered, Twelfth Edition*.

7. Warburg, Gerald (CEL faculty affiliate and CEL grant recipient). 2021. "Restoring the Balance: How Can Congress Reclaim Its Constitutional Authority to Shape Foreign Policy?" *The Wilson Quarterly.*

Research Awards

Our recent research paper on the construction of our State Legislative Effectiveness Scores, titled "Legislative Effectiveness in the American States," won the American Political Science Association SPPQ Award for best paper on state politics and policy presented at a professional conference in 2020.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Center for Effective Lawmaking has continued to move significant research forward in the three main areas of identification, cultivation and accountability with a diverse and growing group of scholars. The CEL has expanded our research to explore each of these three main research areas in regards to lawmaking effectiveness in U.S. state legislatures.

Current works in progress in these four areas that are coauthored by Center Co-Directors Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman, CEL affiliates, and/or CEL small grant award winners, include the following:

Research Projects

1. Identification: Exploring the degree to which educational backgrounds establish the skills and networks that enhance lawmaking effectiveness. Coauthors: Craig Volden, Jonathan Wai, and Alan Wiseman. Working paper entitled, "Elite Education and Legislative Behavior in the U.S. Congress," currently being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

2. Identification: Exploring the degree to which combat veterans become effective lawmakers in Congress. Author: Richard E. Hagner (Lt. Col. U.S. Army, and Vanderbilt University Ph.D. Graduate). CEL Working Paper entitled, "Legislative Effectiveness of Veterans in the U.S. House of Representatives: The Increased Effectiveness of a New Post-9/11 Cohort," currently under review for publication.

3. Identification: Exploring the extent to which candidates reveal characteristics during their early electoral campaigns that can be used to identify them as future effective or ineffective lawmakers once elected. Coauthors: Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, and still recruiting others. Currently entitled "Campaigning to Be an Effective Lawmaker," with research in progress.

4. Identification: Study of the relationship between redistricting and effective lawmaking. Author: Geoffrey M. Lorenz (CEL faculty affiliate and CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Drawing Better Lawmakers: Redistricting Institutions and Legislative Entrepreneurship," with research in progress.

5. Identification and Cultivation: Exploring how prior experiences relevant to lawmaking help cultivate skills of effective lawmakers. Author: Sarah Treul (CEL faculty affiliate and CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "The Effect of Experience on Institutional Influence and Congressional Capacity," with research in progress.

6. Identification and Cultivation: Exploring which policy areas lawmakers focus their attention on, to be responsive to constituents, to take advantage of resources from staff, committees, and interest groups, and to learn from past successes. Coauthors: Geoffrey Lorenz (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, and Hye Young You (CEL faculty affiliate). Currently entitled "Lawmaking Portfolios," with research in progress.

7. Identification and Cultivation: Examination and scoring of the extent to which legislators in Congress value the quality of legislation in solving public policy problems in addition to the ideological positions of such proposals. Coauthors: Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, and still recruiting others. Currently entitled "Who Cares about Quality Proposals in Congress?" with research in progress.

8. Identification and Accountability: Study of the backgrounds and representative styles of lawmakers. Coauthors: Andrew Clarke (CEL faculty affiliate) and Daniel Markovits (CEL grant recipients). Currently entitled "Home Style and Legislative Effectiveness in the U.S. Congress," with research in progress.

9. Cultivation: Study of the role and capacity of congressional staff in conducting dual oversight and lawmaking activities. Coauthors: Jennifer Selin and Hanna Brant (CEL grant recipients). Currently entitled "Brain Drain? Understanding Congressional Staffers' Legislative and Oversight Capabilities," with research in progress.

10. Cultivation: Examination of whether participation in ideological caucuses in Congress enhances or undermines the effectiveness of members. Coauthors: Andrew J. Clarke (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. CEL Working Paper, entitled "The Legislative Effectiveness of Party Faction Members in Congress" currently under review for publication.

11. Cultivation: Examination of the extent to which bipartisan lawmakers are more effective in Congress. Coauthors: Laurel Harbridge Yong (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. CEL Working Paper, entitled "The Bipartisan Path to Effective Lawmaking," currently under review for publication.

12. Cultivation: Examination of numerous prior Center findings upon assigning credit for lawmaking successes to those whose language is incorporated in bills as they progress in the lawmaking process. Coauthors: Mary Kroeger (CEL faculty affiliate), Erinn Lauterbach (CEL post-doctoral scholar), Kelsey Shoub (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "LES 2.0," with research in progress.

13. Cultivation: Examination of the extent to which Representatives who lose their committee positions due to changes in the majority party or number of seats on a particular committee subsequently become less effective lawmakers. Coauthors: Darrian Stacy (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Current working paper, entitled "The Importance of Committee Assignments for Legislative Effectiveness," presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference in April of 2019, being revised for future submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

14. Cultivation: Exploring whether those with more concentrated policy portfolios are more effective than those with more diffuse or diverse policy portfolios. Coauthors: Craig Volden, Alan E. Wiseman. Entitled "Foxes vs. Hedgehogs: Issue Specialization and Effective Lawmaking in the U.S. Congress," presented at the 2020 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, currently being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

15. Cultivation: Exploring how personal networks of lawmakers influence their legislative behavior. Coauthors: James Curry and Jason Roberts (CEL faculty affiliate) (CEL grant recipients). Currently entitled "Personal Relationships and Legislative Effectiveness in Congress," with research in progress.

16. Cultivation: Exploring the relationship between congressional oversight and lawmaking effectiveness in Congress. Author: Kenneth Lowande (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Measuring the Quality of Legislative Oversight," with research in progress.

17. Cultivation: Exploring whether introducing bills repeatedly over time can help with effective lawmaking. Author: Jeremy Gelman (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "The Durable Agenda: Tracking Bill Fates over Time," with research in progress.

18. Cultivation: Exploring the role of amendments within committees as part of effective lawmaking. Coauthors: Nicholas Howard and Mark Owens (CEL grant recipients). Currently entitled "Committees as a Venue for Effectiveness," with research in progress.

19. Cultivation and Accountability: Exploring whether major laws put forth by effective lawmakers have greater longevity than those advanced by others. Coauthors: Charles R. Shipan, Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "Lawmaking Effectiveness and Policy Longevity," with research work in progress.

20. Cultivation and Accountability: Exploring media coverage of effective lawmakers in Congress. Coauthors: Kelsey Shoub (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "The Distorted Image and Voice of Congress: Show Horses vs. Work Horses," presented at the Southern Political Science Association Conference in January 2020. Currently being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

21. Accountability: Exploration of media coverage of effective lawmakers in Congress. Author: Jennifer Lucas (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Congressional National Television Media Strategies: Motivations and Effectiveness," with research in progress.

22. Accountability: Study of the extent to which constituents are aware of (and care about) the lawmaking effectiveness of their representatives in the U.S. House.   Coauthors: Daniel M. Butler, Adam G. Hughes, Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Current working paper, entitled "Do Constituents Know (or Care) about the Lawmaking Effectiveness of their Representatives?" Accepted for publication at *Political Science Research and Methods*.

23. Accountability: Exploring how effective and ineffective lawmakers communicate with their constituents. Author: Annelise Russell (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Communicating Effectiveness: Legislative Success as Constituent Communication," with research work in progress.

24. Accountability: Exploration of the extent to which primary voters and potential primary challengers base their decisions on the effectiveness of lawmakers in Congress. Coauthors: Danielle Thomsen (CEL faculty affiliate), Sarah Treul (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "The Primary Path for Turning Legislative Effectiveness into Electoral Success." Accepted for publication at the *Journal of Politics*.

25. Accountability: Examination of the extent to which effective lawmakers can generate greater amounts of campaign contributions. Coauthors: Geoffrey Lorenz (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, and Hye Young You (CEL faculty affiliate). Currently entitled "Do Campaign Contributions Follow Legislative Effectiveness?" with research work in progress.

26. Accountability: Exploring whether voters hold lawmakers accountable for their effectiveness on issues of greatest salience to their districts. Author: Carlos Algara (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Issue Salience and Effective Representation," with research work in progress.

27. Accountability: Exploring the fundraising activities of effective lawmakers. Author: Danielle Thomsen (CEL faculty affiliate and grant recipient). Currently entitled "Fundraising and Legislating in the U.S. Congress," with research work in progress.

28. States (and Identification): Exploring the extent to which effective lawmaking in state legislatures translates into effective lawmaking in Congress. Coauthors: Peter Bucchianeri (CEL post-doctoral scholar and affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. Currently entitled "Moving on Up: Are State Legislatures Good Training Grounds for Effective Congressional Lawmaking?" presented at the American Political Science Association Conference in August of 2019, the Southern Political Science Association Conference in January 2020, and the University of Texas-Austin Department of Government, January 2020. Under review for publication.

29. States (and Identification): Exploring the rise in the number of veterans serving in state legislatures and their relative effectiveness at lawmaking. Coauthors: Nicole Kliewer (CEL grant recipient), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. Currently entitled "The Lawmaking Effectiveness of Veterans in State Legislatures," with research work in progress.

30. States (and Cultivation): Exploration of the relative effectiveness of state legislators and how institutional structures influence their abilities to advance legislation. Coauthors: Peter Bucchianeri (CEL post-doctoral scholar), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. CEL working paper entitled "Legislative Effectiveness in U.S. State Legislatures," presented at the 2020 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, currently under review for publication. Received American Political Science Association SPPQ Award for best conference paper on state politics and policy presented in 2020.

31. States: Exploring Black disenfranchisement in the American South in the 19th Century, and its impact on lawmaking. Author: Michael Olson (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Black Disenfranchisement and the Effectiveness of Southern State Lawmakers," with research work in progress.

32. Comparative legislatures: Extending legislative effectiveness research to Brazil. Author: Beatriz Rey (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Legislative Effectiveness in Nonprogrammatic Party Systems: Evidence from Brazil," with research work in progress.

The impact of the CEL to the scholarly community has been clear, as organizations have begun to host conversations and panels focused on effective lawmaking research.

In April 2021, the Annual Meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association, which were conducted virtually, featured a panel entitled "Legislative Effectiveness and Legislator Productivity," with research on effective lawmaking being presented by CEL faculty affiliates and other scholars. CEL Co-Directors Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman served as chair and discussants for the panel.

The Center also proposed and assembled a panel for the 2021 American Political Science Association meetings, held in Fall 2021. That panel was accepted (and the panelists presented their work virtually); and we anticipate that the recognition of effective lawmaking research as a keystone of political science research will continue to grow.

RESEARCH TEAM

This year, the CEL supported a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Virginia. Erinn Lauterbach received her Bachelor's degree in political science and psychology from Central College, and her Master's and Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside.

Dr. Lauterbach's dissertation and ongoing research includes her efforts to create a new metric of policy content, allowing explorations of how the incorporation of certain policy tools can help U.S. Representatives further their legislation in Congress. Dr. Lauterbach analyzes this metric to understand how political institutions influence legislative success, and how policy content interacts with representative identities and group membership.

"My postdoctoral fellowship with the Center for Effective Lawmaking at the University of Virginia has been a very fulfilling experience. CEL Co-Directors Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman are not only great co-authors, but they are also extremely supportive of me and my research agenda. I greatly appreciate their mentorship, advice, and guidance throughout my time with the CEL.

During the course of my fellowship, my primary research focus has been on creating updated LES scores for members of the U.S. Congress. The goal of these new scores is to allow legislators to earn credit for their contributions to the policymaking process, even if they do not personally sponsor the bill. Working with a team of faculty affiliates and research assistants, we are currently focused on data collection and cleaning in two ways. First, using bill text, we are working to identify changes in language as legislation moves through the policymaking process and then identifying where that change comes from. Second, we are building a database of amendment text language and identifying the changes that successful amendments make to legislation.

Beyond my work on the updated LES scores, I have also been fortunate to use my time to work on projects that stem from my dissertation, including revising two chapters into journal articles. I have also been able to expand my research agenda, including by co-authoring with Drs. Volden and Wiseman. Combining LES data with my policy content scores, we look at the relationship between effectiveness and detailed policy, demonstrating when higher policy content is associated with greater effectiveness.

I look forward to continuing my work at the CEL during the 2021-2022 school year and beyond."

POST-DOC TESTIMONIAL
Erinn Lauterbach

FACULTY AFFILIATES

Since the launch of our Faculty Affiliate program in 2018, our network of affiliates has grown to twenty-three members across seventeen institutions (including universities, colleges and think tanks) across the U.S. The Faculty Affiliate program promotes a sense of community, and also facilitates increased data and resource sharing among scholars. At least ten of our Faculty Affiliates are currently working on CEL research projects, while others are working to advance the CEL mission in other ways, including building connections and communicating relevant research findings to external stakeholders.

This year we proudly added our former Graduate Affiliate, Dr. Darrian Stacy, as a Faculty Affiliate, following the completion of his Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University, under the direction of CEL Co-Director Alan Wiseman and CEL Faculty Affiliate Josh Clinton. He began his appointment as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the United States Naval Academy this past summer. We also renewed five of our Faculty Affiliates for another two-year term.

NEW PARTNERSHIP: WITH HONOR

This year, the Center for Effective Lawmaking announced a new strategic partnership with the nonprofit organization With Honor to launch a new project that will explore the lawmaking effectiveness of military veterans who serve in state legislatures. This project will build on insights that emerged in an earlier CEL working paper, authored by Lt. Col (and Dr.) Richard Hagner, on the relationship between military service and effective lawmaking in the U.S. Congress. This new partnership has allowed us to bring a new doctoral candidate, Nicole Kliewer, to the team, who will assist with this research. We look forward to sharing the insights we gain about military service and state-level legislative careers in the near future.

BOARD OF ADVISORS

The CEL announced its inaugural Board of Advisors this past academic year. Six enthusiastic supporters of the Center have agreed to serve on our Board. Through the course of two comprehensive meetings, these individuals provided the CEL with strategic guidance and insightful feedback, which will help us successfully navigate new areas while becoming stronger in what we currently offer. Our Advisors have a diverse range of experiences and professional perspectives, having collectively worked in academia, the for-profit consulting industry, and government (including the White House and the U.S. Congress). Our Board of Advisors is co-chaired by Congressman Jason Altmire and Professor Kathryn Pearson of the University of Minnesota.

**Dean
Ian Solomon**

**Associate Professor
Kathryn Pearson**

**Partner,
Harbinger Strategies,
Kyle Nevins**

**Chancellor
Emeritus Nicholas
S. Zeppos**

**Congressman
Jason Altmire**
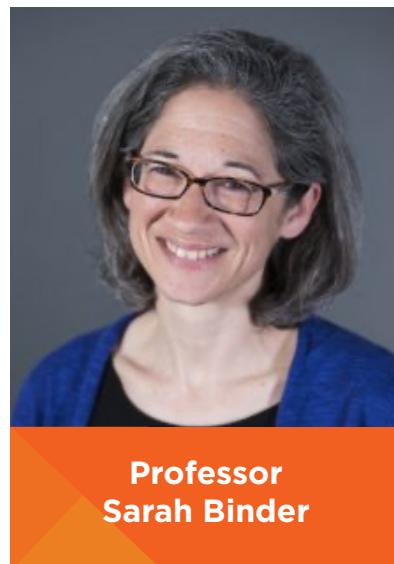
**Professor
Sarah Binder**

As the CEL continues to grow, we look forward to expanding our Board of Advisors to help us engage with new goals and activities.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

While the CEL intern program was initially postponed and then reimagined during the course of the pandemic, working with future effective lawmakers and thought-leaders has remained an important aspect of the work of the Center. During the summer of 2021 we hosted Shanthi Ashok, a rising junior high school student in Fairfax, Virginia, as an intern to work on our project to "Build a Better Congress." Our research assistant program continued in full force in a virtual environment. Across Vanderbilt University and the University of Virginia, we employed nine research assistants to work on a variety of projects in our portfolio.

As a Research Assistant at the Center for Effective Lawmaking for the majority of my undergraduate career, I had the opportunity to put what I learned in the classroom to practice. As a student of Public Policy & Leadership through the Frank Batten School, I held a deep passion for understanding what reforms could be made to correct troubling trends in D.C. The main project I worked on over the course of my tenure with the CEL was evaluating what metrics candidates for Congress would touch on in their speeches, literature, and press releases. Once defined and tracked, the metrics were then analyzed to determine what personal characteristics or tendencies candidates expressed during their campaigns were accurate predictors of their future effectiveness in Congress. Once these predictors were confirmed, among additional findings from other research projects, the data was submitted to incoming members of Congress with hopes that they could become effective members of the legislature once equipped with the knowledge to do so.

As turmoil, divisiveness, and friction continue to plague the democratic process in Washington, it was incredibly rewarding to know the small work I was doing as a college student has the potential to influence the next generation of Congress through the recommendations of Professors Volden and Wiseman. In an era of political history in which the majority of political scientists seem to be focused on the politics of the past, I am very grateful to have been part of a team focused on evaluating the issues of today to help craft a better tomorrow.

Finally, on a more personal note, Professor Volden was an incredible professor to perform research for and to have as a mentor. For any student interested in Congress, the policymaking process, or research, it would be difficult to find a better opportunity to perform meaningful work while still in school than through a position with the Center for Effective Lawmaking. As I look back at my undergraduate career, my time as a Research Assistant was one of the most rewarding experiences, and one which solidified my desire to work in the government space.

Joel Thomas, B.A. '21

EVENTS

ACADEMIC EVENTS

Unfortunately, our signature Annual Research Conference was once again postponed due to safety considerations and recommendations during the COVID pandemic. Yet we look forward to convening our faculty affiliates and Board of Advisors at Vanderbilt University in the future.

Other academic events that we were able to create and offer in a virtual environment included:

In **November**, a live online discussion with Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA), regarding his work on the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress and our corresponding research on how to make Congress more effective (the results of which were shared with the Select Committee through memo).

Also in **November**, a live online discussion with New York Times bestselling author Molly Ball regarding her research and recently published biography of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (titled *Pelosi*). Ms. Ball also commented on her post-election projections for lawmaking in Congress in a public talk entitled "What's Next for Congress."

In **March**, a discussion on the 116th Legislative Effectiveness Scores with Prof. and CEL Faculty Affiliate Gerry Warburg from UVA during a virtual event.

And as part of the UVA Batten School's Faculty Research Seminar Series, Prof. Jamil Scott from Georgetown University presented research entitled "It's All About the Money: Understanding how Black women fund their campaigns at the state level and its impact on their electoral success."

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Engagement with the local community has always been of importance to the Center for Effective Lawmaking. Whether that is sharing our work with emerging leaders, facilitating conversations with politically engaged and active citizens, or making ourselves available for panels on lawmaking effectiveness in legislative bodies around the world, we believe that presenting our research to broad audiences is critical to our mission. Accordingly, this past year the Center for Effective Lawmaking was honored to participate in the following community events:

Creation of an online "short course," available on our website and YouTube, regarding the history of the CEL, the creation of the Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES), and what we can learn about effective lawmaking.

A presentation to the emerging political leaders program at Sorensen Institute.

In response to a speaking request, a presentation on research findings regarding women in lawmaking, to the American Association of University Women, Southwest Virginia.

EVENTS CONTINUED

COMMUNITY EVENTS CONTINUED

Participants on a panel hosted by American University regarding law-making effectiveness in Latin America.

Featured speakers during the "Expert Chats" series at the UVA's Batten School.

In response to a speaking request, a presentation to the Smith Mountain Lake Democrats on the work of the CEL.

CAPITOL HILL STAFF EVENTS

As part of our goal to use our portfolio to build a better Congress, the CEL continued to pursue opportunities to share our findings with practitioners and staff currently working on Capitol Hill. The CEL began a new "Office Hours" program. Responding to invitations, the Center Co-Directors provided legislative effectiveness assessments that were specific to a congressional office, including consideration of successes and challenges. The staff members who have participated in an Office Hours event for their Representative or Senator were engaged with the material, and they found the tailored data to be useful.

This year we had success with the Brookings LEGIS Fellows again, even as it turned into a virtual event.

We also received positive feedback on our presentation as part of the formalized Congressional Management Foundation's online series for incoming Representatives and Senators on how to set a legislative agenda for effectiveness, utilizing content from our New Member Guide.

CONVERSATIONS WITH LAWMAKERS

The CEL was able to capitalize on the move to virtual and online events in exciting ways. One example was the launch of our new "Conversations with Lawmakers" series. Using online video platforms, we interviewed and recorded high-performing lawmakers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Through this new program, we have been able to capture the perspectives of those who serve in the U.S. House and Senate.

We began the series with freshman Representative Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and throughout the year added online interviews with Representative Don Young (R-AK), Representative French Hill (R-AR), Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) and Representative Joe Neguse (D-CO). In addition to our "Conversations with Lawmakers" series, we added a live online discussion with Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA), regarding his work on the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, as well as an interview of Former House Parliamentarian Tom Wickham.

These online format interviews garnered hundreds of views and replays and are a model that we intend to build upon moving forward.

FEATURED CONVERSATIONS WITH LAWMAKERS

"So much of the coverage, as I'm sure you two are undoubtedly aware these days, is, it's almost similar to sports coverage. It's just who's winning, who's losing, and it's a zero sum game, and there's very little focus on the more technical aspects of the work that is done here in Congress, not understanding the huge impact that that work will have on the American public and all that that work entails. So I'm grateful to all of you for doing the report and for continuing to produce it."

Rep. Joe Neguse,
Representative for
Colorado's 2nd District

"Thank you for doing this work. Thank you for thinking very broadly about how we make our legislative branch more effective in getting things done. And I just think the work you're doing is very valuable and I appreciate the efforts you're putting forward."

Sen. Gary Peters,
Senator for Michigan

"Thanks for doing this, guys. I really strongly love the concept of our Constitution and the Congress of the United States. And I worry quite a bit about where it's gone and where it's headed. If we don't change it, you lose your democracy and the Republic which we reside in."

Rep. Don Young,
Representative for
Alaska's At-Large District

USE OF KNOWLEDGE

The release of the Legislative Effectiveness Scores for the 116th Congress was widely publicized. Many members performing in our "Top Ten" lists used our highlights report in their own messaging about the findings. In addition, the new scores, and these exchanges, generated extensive media attention and conversation.

Fox News picked up the press release that was created in partnership with Vanderbilt and UVA communications and many other outlets responded to, or echoed, the Fox News coverage. This increased attention eventually led to a *USA Today* news article on our research, for which we were interviewed.

From the release of the new Legislative Effectiveness Scores, we tracked at least 110 online articles that reported on the scores from a variety of local, national, and international organizations.

There is clearly an appetite for reporting around and an assessment of who on the Hill is getting things done. The CEL is excited to be able to bring a reasoned voice and perspective to such dialogue.

OP-EDS

The Center for Effective Lawmaking Co-Directors published op-ed pieces over the year with the goal of using our research to inform discussions about current political events. We believe that we can help shape and inform public dialogue regarding Congress and legislative activity based on our portfolio of scholarly work.

ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN 2020-2021 INCLUDE:

- "The Promise and Prospects for Cultivating Expertise in Congress," *Washington Post*, September 2020.
- "Focus on Cabinet Nominees' Effectiveness and Expertise, Not Ideology," *The Hill*, December 2020.
- "Committee Chairs Continue their Lawmaking Decline," *The Hill,* March 2021.
- "Experienced Staff Promote Effective Lawmaking," *The Hill*, June 2021.

THE NEW MEMBER GUIDE

The compilation and distribution of our New Member Guide was the culmination of a vision that we spent years thoughtfully cultivating. Using our broad base of award-winning academic research, alongside personal stories that we've received from practitioners, we created a 28-page booklet for new members, which was distributed by mail to all new members of Congress: well over 70 Representatives and Senators.

The New Member Guide, now publicly available on our website, shared our best advice for how new members of Congress can become effective lawmakers. We scoured all materials presented in previous new member orientation activities by numerous organizations, looking for their advice on effective lawmaking. We then tested the implicit hypotheses in these guides to discern which pieces of advice are likely to have the greatest impact if adopted by new legislators.

We distilled some of this information into an easy one-page checklist for members, and a Venn diagram worksheet, to help legislators define their legislative agenda and prioritize their proposals.

This publication was well-received, and we look forward to a time when we can deliver our guides to each new member of Congress in person.

RESOURCES

FUNDING UPDATES

Thanks to the generous financial support by the U.S. Democracy Program of the Hewlett Foundation and The Democracy Fund, today the Center is strong. Additionally, the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy as well as Vanderbilt University continue to support the work of the Center in meaningful ways.

This year, we were also pleased to announce a partnership with the organization With Honor to thoughtfully engage with research surrounding the work of veterans in state legislatures. To that end, the CEL has been able to bring a new doctoral candidate to the team to assist in that work.

The CEL was also a proud recipient of a Bankard Fund award for future conference hosting.

The Center has continued to cultivate a donor base and to make requests for gifts both large and small as it continues to accept investment from engaged citizens.

◢ GROWTH

The past year of the Center's work has been challenging, as most organizations have experienced, but also exciting. We have seen growth and recognition and it has been demonstrated time and again that the public is clamoring for the type of nonpartisan analysis and research that we do. We remain rooted in our belief that the topics that we engage with are useful not only to today's Congress and legislative processes, but also to the future trajectory of our democracy.

As we look to the future, and as we seek to grow the footprint and relevance of the work we do, we have identified our primary strategic objectives for the 2021-2022 Academic Year, as well as created our Strategic Plan for 2020-2023.

It is our intention to continue to pursue these objectives in new and unique ways to our full abilities, mindful of the current environment of a nation reeling, and recovering, from a pandemic. Yet we know that the work we do is even more important given the state of affairs and that "the search for effective lawmakers is perhaps as crucial as it has ever been. It is at times when institutions are failing that effective leaders are needed more than ever." (Volden & Wiseman, 2014, p. 13)

CONTINUING OBJECTIVES

- Continue our Conversations with Lawmakers and Office Hours programs
- Host informative and dynamic speakers, academics and former/current lawmakers
- Support our faculty affiliates
- Administer a fourth round of small grants
- Cultivate the next generation of scholars through our post-doctoral, research assistant and intern programs
- Bring awareness, through media outlets, to the general public regarding Legislative Effectiveness Scores, and research findings that can help build a better Congress

GROWTH OBJECTIVES

- Grow our online library of interviews with practitioners
- Advance our research on state legislative effectiveness scores
- Work to publicize our issue area scores to enhance impact and awareness

The Center for Effective Lawmaking
2020 - 2021 Annual Report

thelawmakers.org