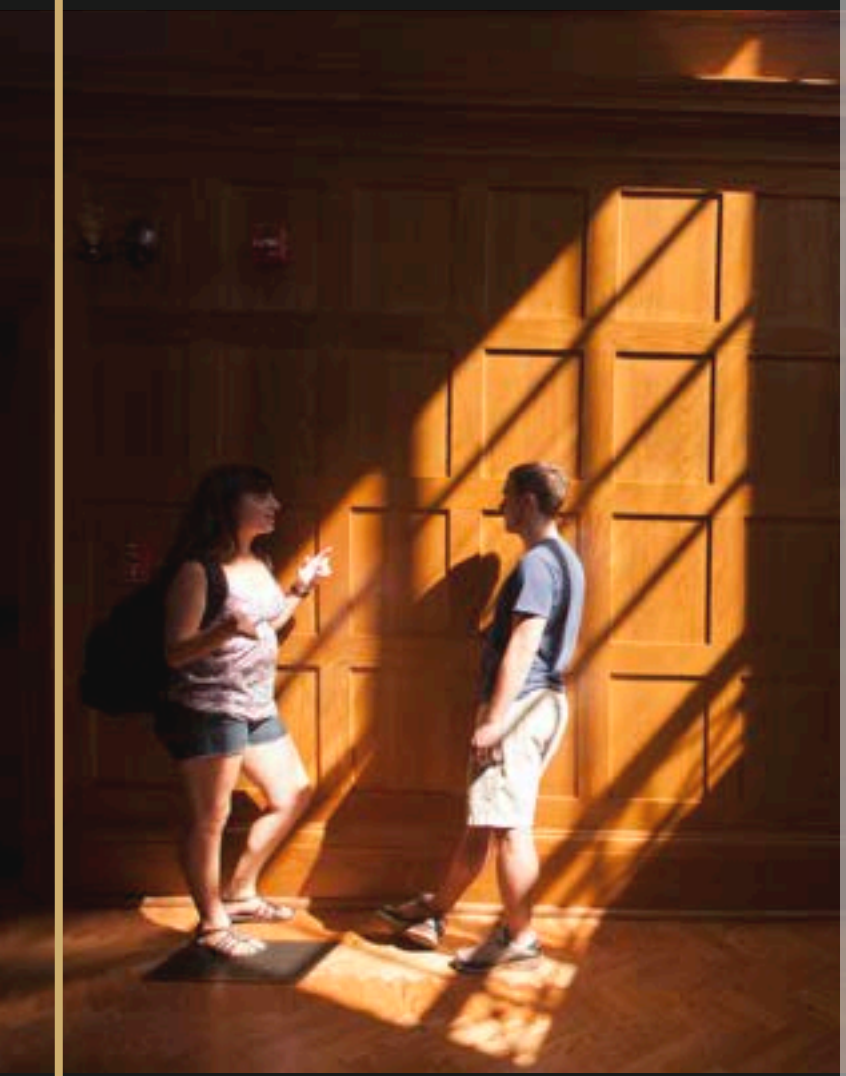
THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE LAWMAKING

2022 to 2023 Annual Report

GARRETT HALL

KIRKLAND HALL



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VISION

We envision American legislatures 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

LETTER FROM CO-DIRECTORS

Thank you so much for your interest in and support of the Center for Effective Lawmaking! We were delighted this year to advance the mission of the Center significantly, both in the generation and the use of new knowledge about effective lawmaking.

Our research community of faculty affiliates, post-doctoral scholars, graduate affiliates, and student research assistants continues to astound us with their hard work and new insights. As noted below, our working paper series is thriving, with new ideas now being advanced on a monthly basis. These working papers, in turn, have evolved into well-received scholarly publications, shedding new light on how lawmakers become informed, on the value of bipartisanship and relationship building, and on the electoral benefits of effective lawmaking, among numerous other areas of inquiry.

Our faculty affiliates and intrepid programmers were central to the release of the new Legislative Effectiveness Scores for the recently-completed 117th Congress. We are proud that these Scores now capture behind-the-scenes lawmaking, offering credit to those Members of Congress who are able to embed legislative language from their own bills in other legislative vehicles working their way into law. The skill and hard work of Mary Kroeger, Erinn Lauterbach, Kelsey Shoub, Mike Xu, and Nick Zeppos, Jr., made this innovation possible, for which we are deeply grateful.

Our signature engagement programs continued to flourish across the course of the past year. We were pleased to be able to provide each new member of the incoming class of the 118th Congress with our revised New Member Guide, through the support of congressional leadership from both political parties. We were also able to share insights on effective lawmaking, in events partnering with numerous good governance organizations at both the state and national level. Additionally, we have now more formally launched our Office Hours program, in which we provide legislative offices a detailed analysis of their lawmaking activities and how they comport with our perspective on effective lawmaking in Congress best practices, as follows from the analysis of nearly fifty years of legislative effectiveness data.

We are excited to expand these sorts of initiatives to the state level. In particular, we are hopeful to soon be in a position to release State Legislative Effectiveness Scores publicly, at the end of each legislative term, broadening the discussion of effective lawmaking into public discourse around state-level policymaking. And we are seeking to translate our orientation materials to the state level as well, where they can be helpful to the hundreds of new legislators entering these important institutions after each election.

Finally, we are thankful for the individuals and organizations who value these initiatives, and who offer their time and financial support. We believe that effective governing institutions are essential to preserving and advancing American democracy, and we appreciate those who share our vision and work to make it a reality.

All the very best,

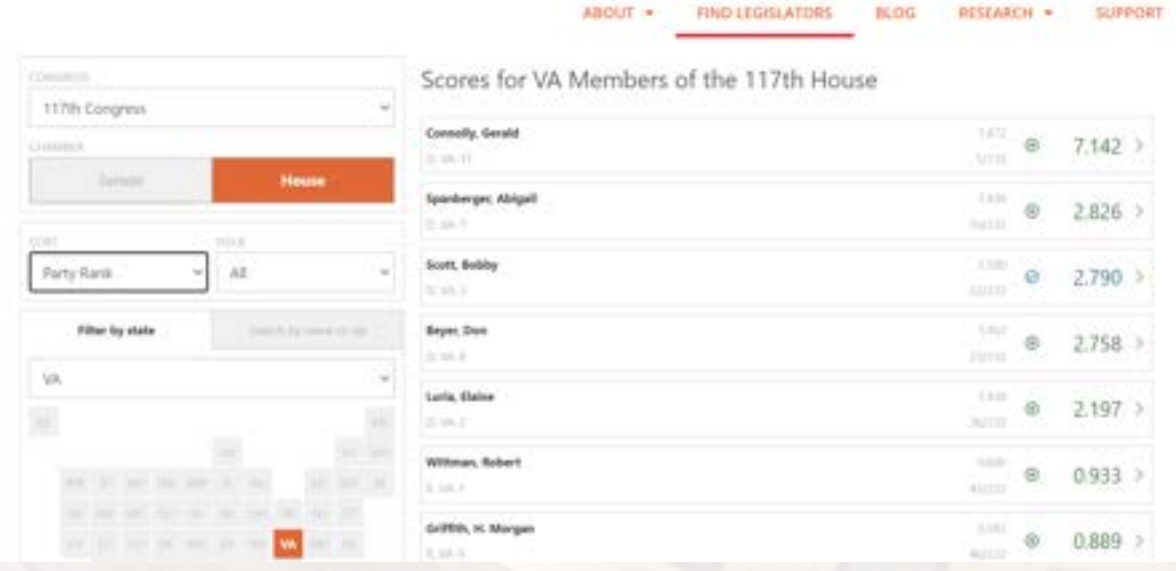
Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman,
CEL Co-Directors

New Legislative Effectiveness Scores

This year, the Center for Effective Lawmaking created a wide variety of content to enhance the knowledge about effective lawmaking at the federal level, and increasingly at the state level as well.

The Center released our updated Legislative Effectiveness Scores for the 117th Congress (both overall and by issue area) in the Spring of 2023. For the first time, the scores assigned credit to lawmakers whose bill language is incorporated into other members' bills that become law.

The new scores and our accompanying report about effective lawmaking were reported in over fifty media stories and cited by members of Congress in about two dozen press releases as well as on their official social media accounts.



KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

State Legislative Effectiveness Scores

We have continued to advance research based on our State Legislative Effectiveness Scores, which capture state legislators' activities over recent decades in state legislative chambers. The revised version of our initial research paper on the topic was recently accepted for publication in the flagship journal for political science (*American Political Science Review*). Our research work on whether effective state lawmakers are more likely to run for Congress (with CEL faculty affiliates Danielle Thomsen and Sarah Treul) was selected for the American Political Science Association SPPQ Award for best paper on state politics and policy presented in 2022. We have been responding to numerous requests from scholars to make the data available to the scholarly community.

Knowledge Generation: By the Numbers

$11,350
in grants awarded

3
post-doctoral researchers and graduate affiliates

9
works published

38
active research projects

28
faculty affiliates at 21 institutions

8
research assistants

SMALL GRANT PROGRAM

In October 2022, the CEL awarded six research grants for a total of $11,350 to scholars across the country. Research from these awards covered a variety of important topics in the legislative effectiveness field, such as state and local legislating ("Partisan Identity among State Legislators: The Connection Between Affective and Effective Lawmaking" and "City Lobbying and Member's Legislative Performance"), communicating accomplishments ("Communicating Legislative Effectiveness"), intraparty organization ("'I Vote My District': The Electoral and Legislative Value of Intraparty Organization in the U.S. House"), pluralism ("Polarizing Pluralism: Party Competition, Interest Group Strategy, and the Resurgent Mischiefs of Faction"), and violence against lawmakers ("Domestic Terrorism Targeting America's Political Elites").

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 state legislatures;
and **accountability** of legislators for their lawmaking effectiveness.

RESEARCH RELEASED

Ban, Pamela, Ju Yeon Park (CEL faculty affiliate), and Hye Young You (CEL faculty affiliate). 2023. "How Are Politicians Informed? Witnesses and Information Provision in Congress." *American Political Science Review*.

Butler, Daniel M., Adam G. Hughes, Craig Volden (CEL Director), and Alan E. Wiseman (CEL Director). 2023. "Do Constituents Know (or Care) about the Lawmaking Effectiveness of their Representatives?" *Political Science Research and Methods*.

Curry, James M. (CEL grant recipient), and Jason M. Roberts (CEL faculty affiliate). 2023. "Interpersonal Relationships and Legislative Collaboration in Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

Harbridge-Yong, Laurel (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden (CEL Director), and Alan E. Wiseman (CEL Director). 2023. "The Bipartisan Path to Effective Lawmaking." *Journal of Politics*.

McGee, Zachary A. (CEL Grant Recipient), and Philip Moniz (CEL Grant Recipient). 2022. "Gift Travel in the U.S. House of Representatives." *Political Research Quarterly*.

Ommundsen, Emily Cottle (CEL graduate affiliate). 2023. "The Institution's Knowledge: Congressional Staff Experience and Committee Productivity." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

Reynolds, Molly E. (CEL faculty affiliate) and Peter C. Hanson. 2023. "Just How Unorthodox? Assessing Lawmaking on Omnibus Spending Bills." *The Forum*.

Treul, Sarah (CEL faculty affiliate), Danielle Thomsen (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden (CEL Director), and Alan E. Wiseman (CEL Director). 2022. "The Primary Path for Turning Legislative Effectiveness into Electoral Success." *Journal of Politics*.

Volden, Craig (CEL Director), and Alan Wiseman (CEL Director). 2023. "Highlights from the New 117th Congress Legislative Effectiveness Scores." CEL Report.

RESEARCH AWARD

In coordination with our Fifth Annual Research Conference, we announced the 2023 Award for Best Publication on Effective Lawmaking. The award was presented to Todd Makse, Associate Professor at Florida International University, for his article in *Political Research Quarterly* titled "Instant Credibility: The Conditional Role of Professional Background in Policymaking Success." In this article, Professor Makse explores how lawmakers can gain credibility in advancing their policy ideas based on their own professional backgrounds and their policy expertise.

Todd Makse

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 also 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:

1. Identification: Exploring the degree to which educational backgrounds establish the skills and networks that enhance lawmaking effectiveness, with differences across political parties. Coauthors: Craig Volden, Jonathan Wai, and Alan Wiseman. Working paper entitled, "On the Decline in Elite-Educated Republicans in Congress," currently under review for publication.

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: Mackenzie Dobson (CEL graduate student affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. Currently entitled "Bipartisan Campaigners Become Effective Lawmakers," 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.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

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. 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.

9. 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 Conditional Lawmaking Benefits of Party Faction Membership in Congress" accepted for publication, and forthcoming at Political Research Quarterly.

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

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

12. 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.

13. Cultivation: Exploring the degree to which Congress and the President work together to advance policy proposals. Coauthors: Samuel Kernell, Roger Larocca, Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "Unification of Powers: When Effective Lawmakers Sponsor Presidential Proposals in Congress," presented at the 2022 European Political Science Association conference, being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

14. Cultivation: Exploring the conditions under which specifically worded legislation or vaguer ideas lead to coalition formation and legislative advancement in Congress. Coauthors: Erinn Lauterbach (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "Policy Specificity and Effective Lawmaking," presented at the 2022 European Political Science Association conference, being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

15. Cultivation: Exploring continuation of partisan lawmaking patterns in the U.S. Senate over the past decade. Coauthors: Craig Volden and Alan E. Wiseman, entitled "The Surprisingly Effective Lawmaking of Minority-Party Democrats During the Trump Senates," forthcoming as chapter in Disruption? The Senate During the Trump Era, by Oxford University Press (to be published in 2024).

16. Cultivation: Exploring the changing nature of political pluralism. Co-Authors: Geoff Lorenz (CEL grant recipient and Faculty Affiliate), Jesse Crosson, and Zander Furnas. Currently entitled "Polarizing Pluralism: Party Competition, Interest Group Strategy, and the Resurgent Mischiefs of Faction," with research work in progress.

17. 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.

18. Cultivation: Exploring how cities represented by effective lawmakers can rely on them instead of their own lobbying efforts. Author: Fred Gui (CEL grant recipient and post-doctoral researcher). Currently entitled "City Lobbying and Member's Legislative Performance," with research work in progress.

19. Cultivation: Exploring how intraparty groups are formed and sustained in Congress. Author: Gabe Foy-Sutherland (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "'I Vote My District': The Electoral and Legislative Value of Intraparty Organization in the U.S. House," with research work in progress.

20. Cultivation: Exploring the lawmaking successes of progressive women of color in Congress. Author: Cathy Wineinger (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Activists in the House: Insights on Legislative Effectiveness from Progress Women of Color," with research in progress.

21. Cultivation: Exploring the resolution of policy dissent within congressional committees. Author: Jonathan Lewallen (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Effective Legislators and Dissent in Congressional Committees," with research work in progress.

22. 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.

23. Cultivation and Accountability: Exploring the complementary nature of lawmaking and constituency service. Author: Nicole Kalaf-Hughes (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Collaboration as a Means to Effective Representation in Congress," with research work in progress.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

24. Cultivation and Accountability: Exploring the degree to which vilifying public rhetoric is linked to less effective lawmaking. Author: Seth Warner (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Affective Polarization and Legislative Behavior: Citizen Heat and Elite Red Meat," with research work in progress.

25. Accountability: Exploring ways to communicate legislative accomplishments. Co-Authors: Michael Kistner (CEL grant recipient), Beth Simas, Jamie Wright, and David Hilden. Currently entitled "Communicating Legislative Effectiveness," with research work in progress.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. 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," presented at 2022 American Political Science Association meeting.

29. Accountability: Exploring the nature of political violence. Co-Authors: Alexandra Filindra (CEL grant recipient), Laurel Harbridge-Yong (CEL faculty affiliate), John Cluverius, Joshua Dyck. Currently entitled "Domestic Terrorism Targeting America's Political Elites," with research work in progress.

30. States (and Identification): Exploring the extent to which effective lawmaking in state legislatures translates into effective lawmaking in Congress. Coauthors: Peter Bucchianeri (CEL research affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. Currently entitled "Moving on Up: Are State Legislatures Good Training Grounds for Effective Congressional Lawmaking?" currently being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

31. 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.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

32. States (and Identification): Exploring whether effective or ineffective state lawmakers are more likely to run for Congress and win their elections. Coauthors: Danielle Thomsen (CEL faculty affiliate), Sarah A. Treul (CEL faculty affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. Currently entitled "Legislative Effectiveness, Progressive Ambition, and Electoral Success," presented at the 2022 American Political Science Association conference, being revised for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Received American Political Science Association SPPQ Award for best conference paper on state politics and policy presented in 2022.

33. 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 research affiliate), Craig Volden, and Alan Wiseman. CEL working paper entitled "Legislative Effectiveness in the American States," presented at the 2020 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, currently forthcoming at American Political Science Review. Received American Political Science Association SPPQ Award for best conference paper on state politics and policy presented in 2020.

34. States (and Cultivation): Explorations of Black women in state legislatures as "heavy lifters" or legislative initiatives. Author: Jatia Wrighten (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "The Legislative Effectiveness of Black Women," with research work in progress.

35. States (and Cultivation): Exploring state legislators to understand the causes and effects of affective polarization among political elites. Author: Samuel Frederick (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Partisan Identity among State Legislators: The Connection Between Affective and Effective Lawmaking," with research work in progress.

36. 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.

37. Comparative legislatures: Extending legislative effectiveness research to Brazil. Author: Beatriz Rey (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Legislative Effectiveness in Comparative Perspective: The Case of Brazil's Chamber of Deputies," with research work in progress.

38. Comparative local legislatures: Exploring the effect of term limits in municipalities on the potential for effective local policymaking. Author: Susan Miller (CEL grant recipient). Currently entitled "Legislative Term Limits in Municipalities: How Term Limits Shape Effective Lawmaking at the Local Level," with research work in progress.

RESEARCH TEAM

Post-Doctoral Fellows and Graduate Affiliates

Patrick Buhr

Mackenzie Dobson

Emily Cottle Ommundsen

Arjun Vishwanath

Fred Gui

This year, Patrick Buhr (Vanderbilt University PhD student), Mackenzie Dobson (University of Virginia PhD student), and Emily Cottle Ommundsen (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill PhD student) served as CEL Graduate Affiliates. Throughout the year, we also employed eight research assistants between Vanderbilt University and the University of Virginia. For the coming academic year, the CEL has hired two post-doctoral researchers. At Vanderbilt University, we are hosting Arjun Vishwanath (PhD from Harvard University). At the University of Virginia, we are hosting Fred Gui (PhD from Rochester University).

FACULTY AFFILIATES

Since the launch of our Faculty Affiliate program in 2018, our network of affiliates has grown to twenty-eight members across twenty-one 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. Aligned with our diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, seventeen of the CEL faculty affiliates are women and/or underrepresented minorities. About half 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 the following associates:

Christian Fong
University of Michigan

Ju Yeon (Julia) Park
Ohio State University

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Eight enthusiastic supporters of the Center have agreed to serve on our Board, with the most recent addition being Congressman Tom Davis (currently at the law firm Holland & Knight). Our Advisors offered excellent guidance on how best to implement different aspects of our strategic plan. Our board has 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). We are also aiming to expand our board to include a member with extensive connections to the media to enhance our communications strategies, and to expand connections to Congress (especially the Senate). Our Board of Advisors is co-chaired by Congressman Jason Altmire and Professor Kathryn Pearson of the University of Minnesota.

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

Congressman Jason Altmire
United States House of Representatives (2007-2013)

Sarah Binder
Professor of Political Science, George Washington University

Congressman Tom Davis
United States House of Representatives (1995-2008)

Kyle Nevins
Co-founder, Harbinger Strategies

Kathryn Pearson
Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Minnesota

Dean Ian Solomon
Dean of the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

Thomas Wickham
Former Parliamentarian of the U.S. House of Representatives

Chancellor Emeritus Nicholas S. Zeppos
Chancellor of Vanderbilt University (2008-2019)

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

We restarted the internship program at the Batten School, with both in-person and remote opportunities to allow for work flexibility. A total of three interns were brought on during the academic year and one for the summer of 2023, with this number expected to grow next year. Students were helpful in writing blogs, reviewing and editing reports and videos, and supporting CEL events and outreach efforts.

"During my time interning with the Center for Effective Lawmaking, I gained valuable insights into the intricate legislative process and the key factors that contribute to successful policymaking. This opportunity enhanced my understanding and appreciation of evidence-based policymaking."

- Lyla Denny, Fall 2022 Intern

"While interning with CEL this past summer I coded for bipartisan language for various first time Congressional campaigners in order to create a plethora of data that could be used to help support the connection between bipartisanship and legislative effectiveness...I was able to be a part of a process that will hopefully contribute to greater legislative effectiveness and bipartisanship throughout Congress."

- Tristan How, Summer 2023 Intern

"Working as an intern for the CEL exposed me to new experiences I did not even know existed before. It was interesting to see how groups like the CEL can communicate and collaborate with congressmen and their staff to find ways to improve their skillset."

- Alex Sarchet, Spring 2023 Intern

EVENTS

Signature Events

We held our **5th Annual Research Conference** at Vanderbilt University in June. Featuring a keynote speech by Vanderbilt Chancellor Daniel Diermeier (below left) and following the successful format from previous conferences, the main sessions featured five one-hour-length presentations and discussions, as well as three short presentations from CEL grant recipients and affiliates. Topics ranged from information sharing in policymaking, to electoral success based on effective lawmaking, to how legislator backgrounds influence their lawmaking behavior.

The conference was well-attended, drawing over 40 scholars from colleges and universities across the United States and around the world, as well as engaging students and faculty at the university. Venue highlights included a dinner at Vanderbilt's Dyer Observatory where attendees engaged with a discussion between Co-Director Alan Wiseman and Pulitzer-Prize winning historian and Vanderbilt Professor Jon Meacham (below right).

EVENTS

Academic Events

The CEL organized panels at the 2022 American Political Science Association Conference in Montreal and the 2023 Midwest Political Science Association Conference in Chicago. Both were very well attended (standing room only in Montreal), and were accompanied by CEL organized dinners for 10-20 CEL faculty and doctoral affiliates. These events are extremely important to spread awareness of research work on effective lawmaking to the broader academic community and to build further connections among CEL affiliates.

In July of 2022, Co-Director Craig Volden and Faculty Affiliate Laurel

Harbridge-Yong served as panelists for "Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Leaders" hosted by the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

EVENTS

Community Events

The CEL (in conjunction with Batten School classes) hosted highly effective congressional lawmakers from Virginia (Gerry Connolly, Abigail Spanberger, and Rob Wittman) in three separate events.

Starting on the left: Congressman Gerry Connolly, UVA President James Ryan, Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, CEL Faculty Affiliate Gerry Warburg, and Congressman Rob Wittman.

In April of 2023, CEL co-director Alan Wiseman participated in an interview for the "Notes From Nash" podcast, supported by the Vanderbilt University student newspaper (The Hustler). He discussed perspectives on effective lawmaking and contemporary policymaking that followed from Center research.

EVENTS

Conversations with Lawmakers Series

"I give current members of Congress the same advice. I tell them, do something that you're gonna enjoy doing."

Former Rep. Will Hurd

The CEL continued its "Conversations with Lawmakers" series. Using in-person meetings and online video platforms, we interviewed and recorded high-performing lawmakers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to capture the perspectives of those who serve in the U.S. House and Senate. The latest in our series featured a conversation with former Rep. Will Hurd (R-TX) in September 2022; we highlighted the interview again in the Summer of 2023 when he announced his run for president.

Other Events

In September of 2022, The Center for Effective Lawmaking presented information on effective lawmaking to a delegation from the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) in Washington, D.C. Discussion focused on measuring effectiveness and accountability, on habits of effective lawmaking, and on institutional reforms.

In December of 2022, the CEL co-hosted – with the Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy, Lyceum Labs, and the Millennial Action Project (MAP) – a public event entitled "Success in the States: How Outstanding State Lawmakers Lead and Govern" in Washington, DC. It featured insights from a bipartisan group of current and former state legislators who spoke about their experience and provided valuable insights into how legislators can achieve success on the state level.

USE OF KNOWLEDGE

We have continued to build relationships with journalists focused on lawmaking on Capitol Hill. In addition, we have begun more concrete conversations with potential partners to help promote the dissemination and use of our Legislative Effectiveness Scores and related research findings.

Partnerships

The Center continued its many relationships with partner organizations on a number of fronts, all in alignment with the CEL mission. We maintained existing partnerships for congressional staff training with the Stennis Fellows Program, Brookings LEGIS Fellows, and APSA Congressional Fellows Program. New partnerships included Lyceum Labs, and renewed interactions with the Millennial Action Project and the Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy. We are also exploring a virtual event with the Program on Legislative Negotiation at American University with the intent of more collaboration in the future. Moreover, we have been exploring various partnership opportunities with Protect Democracy.

EVENTS

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. We continued our "Office Hours" program, which involves in-depth consultations with the legislative staff from a Representative or Senator's office. In addition, we had several successful events aimed at this audience to bring awareness to the Center's work.

In October of 2022, the Center for Effective Lawmaking co-hosted a retreat of high-level congressional staff at the University of Virginia, in partnership with the Stennis Center for Public Service (a federal, bipartisan legislative branch agency established by the U.S. Congress to provide public service programs and development opportunities).

In addition to a dinner with Batten School students, the Stennis Fellows met in the Rotunda at UVA, where Co-Directors Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman led a discussion of the work of the CEL and the best practices for being an effective lawmaker. The Fellows provided feedback based on their own experiences, which was valuable for the Co-Directors as they seek to expand and update CEL research.

EVENTS

Staff Events

In February of 2023, the CEL hosted a forum for congressional staffers at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, DC, entitled "Tools for Effective Lawmaking." The purpose of the event was to provide attendees with an overview of the CEL, its mission, and its research-driven best practices for effective lawmaking in Congress; and to make staffers aware of other valuable resources that they might draw on in their jobs. In addition to the CEL Co-Directors Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman, the panel also included seasoned congressional, White House, and media veterans who provided attendees with guidance on how best to achieve their lawmaking objectives.

In March of 2023, the CEL once again spoke with the Brookings LEGIS Fellows event in Washington, DC, to present our research on effective lawmaking and to get feedback from the fellows.

EVENTS

Staff Events

Also in April of 2023, the CEL gave two virtual presentations – one for the APSA Congressional Fellows the other for Millenial Action Project – which also offered insights based on Center research.

RESOURCES

Funding Updates

Thanks to the generous financial support by the U.S. Democracy Program of the Hewlett Foundation, the Democracy Fund, and With Honor, today the Center continues to thrive. 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.

The CEL has been in communication with development officers at multiple levels of both of our universities about potential future plans, and continues to cultivate a donor base and to make requests for gifts both large and small as it continues to accept investment from engaged citizens.

OUR FUTURE

As we launch our 2023-26 Strategic Plan, the CEL is more confident than ever of the importance of its mission to enhance the effectiveness of individual lawmakers and U.S. legislative institutions. We continue to embrace our founding argument 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). We are proud of what we have accomplished thus far, and look forward to the work we have in store in the future.

Continuing Objectives

- Expand our Conversations with Lawmakers series
- Cultivate the next generation of scholars through our post-doctoral, graduate affiliate, research assistant, and small grant programs
- Support our faculty affiliates, producing new working papers and publications
- Strengthen our signature congressional engagement programs with additional staff and member briefings

Growth Objectives

- Significantly expand our Office Hours program in Congress
- Update and publicly release our State Legislative Effectiveness Scores
- Adapt our New Member Guide and circulate to newly elected state legislators

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2022 - 2023 Annual Report

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To support the Center for Effective Lawmaking,
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