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Advocacy group puts its former leader at top of its legislative rankings

Progressive Maryland gives Hucker a 99, O'Donnell clocks in at 3

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A liberal lobbying group has given its former director its highest rating on a legislative scorecard that generally favored Democrats.

Progressive Maryland's scorecard — covering the General Assembly's 2007 special session and the 2008 legislative session — gave Del. Tom Hucker a 99 out of 100 in its rankings. Twenty percent of the score came from a subjective "leadership" evaluation in which Hucker received a 19 out of 20.

Sean Dobson, Progressive Maryland's executive director, saw nothing unusual in Hucker's ranking.

"He's a lifetime advocate for working families so it's not surprising at all," Dobson said.

Hucker (D-Dist. 20) of Takoma Park said the scorecard showed he was doing what he promised during the 2006 election.

"I would think it would be weird if I got a low score," said Hucker, who led the organization for seven years. He is now a regional coordinator for the Mid-Atlantic Laborers Union, based in Reston, Va.

All lawmakers in the rankings, released Monday morning, averaged 66, Dobson said. Democrats averaged 84 in the House and 80 in the Senate.

In addition to Hucker, Dobson singled out House Ways and Means Chairman Sheila E. Hixson (D-Dist. 20) of Silver Spring and Del. Roger Manno (D-Dist. 19) of Silver Spring as "champions of working families." Both scored 98.

Sens. Paul G. Pinsky (D-Dist. 22) of University Park, James N. Robey (D-Dist. 13) of Elkridge and James C. Rosapepe (D-Dist. 21) of College Park were singled out as leaders in the Senate. Each received a 97 score.

Members of the GOP were singled out as "champions of wealthy special interests." They were Sens. Janet Greenip (R-Dist. 33) of Crofton and Bryan W. Simonaire (R-Dist. 31) of Pasadena, each with a score of 11; and Dels. Joseph C. Boteler III (R-Dist. 8) of Carney, Donald H. Dwyer Jr. (R-Dist. 31) of Glen Burnie, Warren E. Miller (R-Dist. 9A) of Woodbine and House Minority Leader Anthony J. O'Donnell (R-Dist. 29C) of Lusby, who each scored a 3.

The top 124 positions on the list went to Democrats, who outnumber Republicans in the 188-member legislature 137-51. The highest ranked Republican on the list with a 51 was Del. Richard A. Weldon (R-Dist. 3B) of Brunswick, considered a moderate among the GOP caucus.

The rankings, released Monday morning, incorrectly listed Robey as a Republican.

The General Assembly was rated on votes for nine pieces of legislation, in addition to the leadership score. Leadership was measured by what lawmakers did in subcommittees to advance

or hold back legislation.

“The leadership score is a judgment based on the bulk of work done behind the scenes and what lobbyists witness first hand,” Dobson said, in a telephone news conference. “Progressive Maryland has three professional lobbyists, and we know who behind the scenes is helpful and who’s not.”

Lawmakers received either a plus or a minus based on their votes on legislation.

Nine bills went into the scorecard, and progressive income tax reform was weighted most heavily, Dobson said. Two other bills — public financing of political campaigns and expansion of health care — were also more heavily weighted than the six other pieces of legislation.

Although the public campaigns bill has passed the House and a Senate committee, the measure never received a vote in the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee during either session covered by the 2008 scorecard. As a result, all but one lawmaker — Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Dist. 27) of Chesapeake Beach — received a “NA.” Miller, who opposes public financing of campaigns, received a minus sign.

The knock on Miller was the only public effect of the legislation on the scorecard. Dobson said leadership scores, too, were affected by the failure of the legislation to move forward.

How lawmakers scored

Go to www.gazette.net/links for rankings and methodology Progressive Maryland used.