

Detailed Description of Leadership Score

Of the approximately 2,000 bills introduced each legislative session in the Maryland General Assembly, only a fraction get a floor vote and fewer still get enacted into law. Clearly, then, much of the work of the General Assembly involves jockeying to get a bill to the floor. What are some of lawmakers' non-voting activities that determine the fate of pro-worker legislation, especially whether a pro-worker bill reaches the floor intact?

- Does a lawmaker agree to meet with pro-worker lobbyists?
- Does he at least call back pro-worker lobbyists?
- Does she state her position and concerns forthrightly so pro-worker lobbyists know where she stands?
- Does she actively work with/against us?
- Feed/deny us useful information?
- Sponsor our bills?
- Cosponsor our bills?
- Has enough skill and clout to push a bill successfully?
- Speaks for/against it in caucus, committee, on the floor, at press conferences?
- Lobbies colleagues for/against it?
- Push friendly amendments and resist hostile amendments?

These are the major factors that constitute a lawmaker's "Leadership Score" on our scorecard. Just as selecting a handful of bills out of 2,000 for inclusion on the scorecard is a necessarily subjective enterprise, so too is assessing a lawmaker on these non-voting activities. Does the inescapably subjective nature of these assessments doom our scorecard to bias and/or inaccuracy?

No. Just because the assessments lacks the precision of math or science, they are nonetheless based on the judgment of the professional, highly skilled lobbyists we consult, especially those employed by PMEF's sister organization, Progressive Maryland, who spend the entire legislative session in Annapolis, watch lawmakers like a hawk every day, and understand the intricate workings of the General Assembly. Thus the assessment of the leadership qualities described above is PROFESSIONAL and based on PROVEN EXPERTISE and therefore accurate (though admittedly not scientific).

By analogy, if you need legal representation, you want a good lawyer, not a hack. Is the legal profession a scientific enterprise, like physics? Of course not. But you would feel much better placing your legal fate in the hands of a SKILLED, PROFESSIONAL lawyer rather than a hack (or a non-lawyer). The working families of our state have skilled professional advocates at PM and PMEF who report back to our clients at the end of each session via the scorecard with an accurate and professional (though unavoidably subjective) assessment that rates everything that lawmakers do to advance or hinder a pro-worker agenda – both votes cast and behind-the-scenes work.

Here is a real example of how the Leadership Score helps create a more accurate rating of a lawmaker. During the 2009 session, an unnamed legislator met with PM's lobbyists to discuss a pro-worker bill in his committee, listened to the merits of the bill and raised no objections during the meeting, but said he would not take a public position on the bill until after the committee hearing. After the hearing, he still refused to take a public position. But when the bill was referred to his subcommittee, he did his utmost to gut the bill by working to attach hostile amendments to it – and indeed one of those amendments got attached to the bill. PM and allies scrambled and succeeded in persuading the full committee to undo most of the damage. When the full committee voted on the partially restored bill, the unnamed lawmaker glumly voted for it because he knew an open “nay” vote against this popular bill would hurt him politically in his district. Later still, PM and allies persuaded the House-Senate conference committee to fully repair the bill; this same lawmaker glumly voted for it again on the floor. Without the Leadership Score, a scorecard would simply record this lawmaker as voting for the bill, when in fact all his effort went into GUTTING the bill. His opposition behind the scenes (in this case, at the subcommittee level) almost ruined the bill and forced PM's lobbyists to do a lot of damage control when they could have been working to advance other pro-worker bills during the time-limited, 90-day legislative session. Any scorecard that ignores this kind of behind-the-scenes action would be a poor measurement of a lawmaker's overall work. Our scorecard assesses this vital action via the Leadership Score.