

Legislature Gets Highest Grades in 9 Years from Lobbyists

Members of the legislature’s “third house” — registered lobbyists — gave the 2018 session their highest performance grades by far in the 9 years of the *Elway Poll’s* annual Legislative Report Card.

This year’s “C+” (GPA=2.47) was a full point higher than last year’s grade (1.46). It is the first year in which “A” and “B” grades outnumbered “Ds” and “Fs” (52% to 15%). In fact, it is the highest number of “As” and “Bs” and the lowest number of “Ds” and “Fs” recorded. (*graph on p.2*).

This session got higher grades than last year on 8 of 9 issue categories except transportation, which stayed essentially the same (2.38 vs. 2.41). The highest grade (2.95) went to the performance on K-12 education issues, owing largely to the resolution of the school funding issue. Social and Human Services issues were next (2.60) followed by Higher Education (2.54).

Finishing on time is considered a big accomplishment these days: it topped the list as the “most significant accomplishment” of the session, named by 18% of respondents. K-12 funding was volunteered by 15%, followed by social services bills (10%). The rejection of news taxes (10%), including the carbon tax and capital gains tax proposals was listed as “most significant” by 10% of respondents (*p.2*).

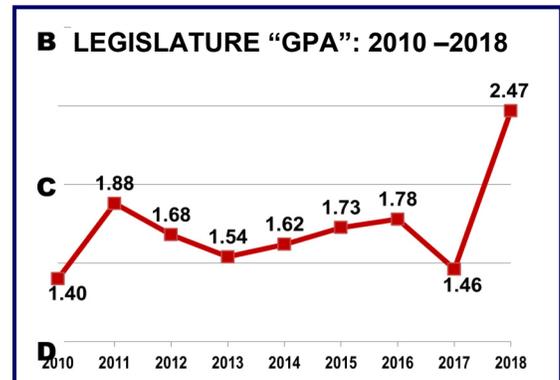
Failure of the carbon tax was cited as the #1 disappointment of the session, named by 14% of respondents. Inaction on gun safety was named by 11%. Some 12% listed specific bills passed as their chief disappointment, while 10% listed specific bills that were rejected.

A total of 18% made complaints about the Democrats’ management of the session, including 7% who said they were breaking legislative rules or did not allow enough debate; 7% who cited lack of fiscal restraint; and 4% who claimed they were paying off their special interest backers.

Predictably, the session’s highest grades came from social services lobbyists (2.85) and education advocates (2.76). The lowest grades came from the business (2.15) and environmental lobbies (2.22).

Social services lobbyists gave the legislature a 3.14 for its work on their issues. The education lobby gave the session a 3.04 for K-12 education and a 2.92 for higher education. The K-12 work also got a 3.16 from labor and a 3.15 from public sector lobbyists.

Business and environmental advocates were the most disappointed with this session. Environmentalists gave the legislature the lowest grade from any lobby for any topic (1.85) for its work on environmental issues. The second lowest grade (1.92) was given by the business lobby for the session’s work on economic issues.



2018 LEGISLATURE REPORT CARD

OVERALL PERFORMANCE	C+
K-12 Education	B-
Social/Human Services	C+
Higher Education	C+
Public Safety	C+
Transportation	C+
Health Care	C
The Economy	C
Environment/Nat.Resources	C

Democratic Caucuses Graded Highest of “5 Corners”

Senate Democrats received the highest grades of the so-called “5 corners” of the legislative process, followed closely by their counterparts in the House. Senate Democrats had a 2.44 “grade point average,” with 48% grading them an “A” or “B”. House Democrats were close behind at 2.42, with a 55% majority giving them an “A” or “B” grade.

House Republicans, who had the highest grade in last year’s session, were well behind with a 2.14 average and 36% grading them “A” or “B”. Senate Republicans slipped to fourth place, from third lowest year with a 2.11 average and 37% “A” or “B” grades.

The Governor’s office had the lowest grades of the session, as it has every year. This year’s average was 1.74 with 28% “A” or “B” vs. 48% “D” or “F”.

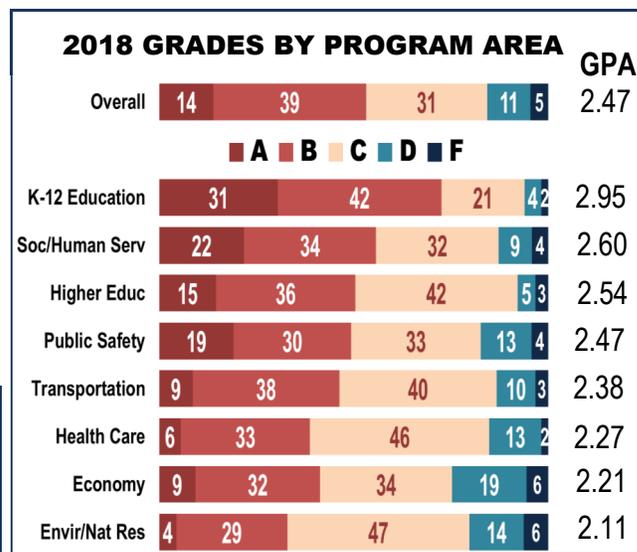
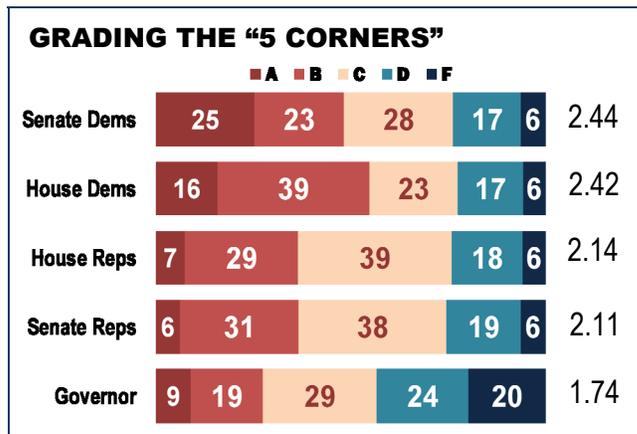
The Governor’s office got its lowest from the environmental lobby (1.27).

Inslee’s office’s overall average is 1.37 since his first session in 2013. By way of comparison, Christine Gregoire’s average for her last 3 sessions (the first time this grading was done) was 1.83, topping out at 2.03 in her final session—higher than any of the 4 caucuses and just behind the Majority Coalition in the Senate.

The grades for all 5 corners was up over last year, reflecting the overall higher ratings for this year’s session compared to previous years.

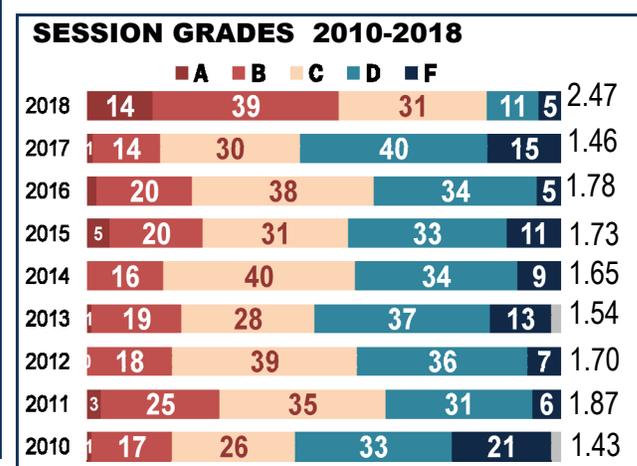
Senate Democrats got their highest ratings from the education lobby (2.92); House Democrats from social services advocates (2.94).

House Republicans got their highest grades from the transportation lobby (2.52); Senate Republicans from business (2.50).



Most Significant Outcome & Disappointment

OUTCOME		DISAPPOINTMENT	
Finished On Time	18%	No Carbon Tax	14%
K-12 Funding	15%	Specific Bills Passed	12%
Soc Svcs Bills	10%	Gun Safety Inaction	11%
No New Taxes	10%	Specific Bills Stopped	10%
Capital Budget	8%	Public Records Bill	8%
Hirst Fix	8%	Lack of Fiscal Restraint	7%
Volume of Bills	7%	Process	7%
Specific Legislation	6%	Death Penalty	5%
Progressive Legislation	6%	Special Interest pay offs	4%
Deadly Force Bill	6%	Partisan Polarization	4%
Supplemental Budget	3%	Lack of Climate Action	3%
		No New Revenue	3%
		Governor	2%
		Quantity of Bad Bills	2%
		Anti Business	2%



The questions were open-ended. Answers were coded into these categories.

The Last Word. A sampling respondents' observations about the session.

PROCESS

- *Senate Democrats struggled with the mechanics of being in the majority. Fortunately for them, Senate Republicans were hit-and-miss as the loyal opposition. House Democrats stuck to their tired game plan of basing their budget on a tax hike, with no real intention of bringing it to a vote. Meanwhile, House Republicans fielded an impressive opposition to a few key bills, demonstrating again their mastery of the minority, but have yet to turn that into a message that will resonate with voters.*
- *Ongoing disregard for public process is disappointing. This session showed this trend is not partisan - lack of tolerance for authentic public input is embedded into how they prefer to do business.*
- *Democrats proved that majority leadership in the House and Senate would lead to good legislation and finishing on-time.*
- *Democrats demonstrated they cannot resist spending new revenue. They need to break that habit and focus more on policy.*
- *Besides going at a dizzying pace to pass major legislation, the Democrat majorities showed a lack of regard for procedure and process, especially toward the end.*
- *Overall, it was nice, in the end to actually see policy concerns worked with reasonableness and without letting the extremes triumph.*

PACE

- *Short session treated like a long session with lots of major policy considered. Crazy and overwhelming pace at the beginning of session.*
- *Because of the number of bills the session was unnecessarily fast paced. Some good and important bills died because so much time was spent on 'hero' bills.*
- *A disappointing session, too many bills rushed through for a short session giving the appearance of a panicked, disorganized leadership, with late hearings and often little notice. Overall impression of Democrat management in the legislature was of the deer in the headlights variety. Not impressive!*
- *This was the fastest paced short session in all my years lobbying. Committees hit the ground running, bills were passed in the first few weeks, and new Senate D committee chairs did a great job of listening and acting.*
- *The volume of legislation introduced and considered was significantly greater than in any session in memory. There was also a significant decline in legislators working constructively with stakeholders to find solutions than in the recent past.*
- *Majority parties lacked the discipline to set and focus on a limited, meaningful agenda.*

PUBLIC RECORDS

- *The Governor will get a public polling boost from his veto the public records act bill, but it comes at the expense of relationships with his legislative colleagues.*
- *The Open Records fiasco cast a shadow over the whole session.*
- *The big face-plant was the hastily-conceived and voted upon Public Records Act bill.*

PARTISANSHIP

- *The bipartisan approach of the last several years is gone. Not a good thing for public policy.*
- *I thought they considered more, had better bi partisan work and the finished on time!!*
- *There were a lot of opportunities for bi-partisanship, but the Democrats chose not to take them.*
- *The House Republicans exhibited signs of Stockholm Syndrome this session.*
- *The 2018 Legislature was a strategic success for Democrats, who demonstrated that they could govern effectively if given the chance while at the same time dismissing Republican fearmongering that a Democratic majority would result in over-regulation or tax-and-spend budgeting.*

PENT UP DEMAND

- *There was a lot of pent-up energy related to wrapping up McCleary and D's gaining control of the Senate which created a frenetic pace and an apparent disregard for process and our state constitution. I think some interesting precedents were set this session that will not serve the public.*
- *With the Dems in control, they understandably wanted to catch up with their agenda. Basically tunnel vision.*
- *This functional governing is what happens, it seems, when five years of disingenuousness, obstructionism, and conservative Republican antiquated ideological constipation is removed from the process.*
- *The sheer volume of bills on a variety of issues that won overwhelming support in the Senate shows Republican leadership has been blocking popular initiatives.*

POLICY

- *It was breathtaking to see the successful pace of the Legislature this year — finishing on time while "running the table" on fully funding McCleary, major positive reforms to voting registration and voting rights, improving funding for affordable housing and homeless services, establishing some meaningful criminal justice reforms ... net neutrality and ACA / RPA provisions, protecting orcas and native salmon, and all while not just not raising taxes but actually cutting the Republicans' nasty property tax increase / shift from 2017.*
- *Was a bad year for business and the rules did not matter, senate raided rainy day fund with simple majority and rules were for 60%. This was horrible.*
- *Very productive on a number of fronts, Low income housing, McCleary final fix, voting rights all good.*
- *Labor won big victories across the board; SEIU 775 fix being the most significant - and corrupt. Trial lawyers won big victory with mandatory arbitration limit increased. Business community played constant defense; hard to point to positive bills passed to help the private sector. War on business community at all times. Health insurance community hit particularly hard.*

- *we badly need increased media coverage*

Sample Profile

The higher grades beg the question of whether this year's respondents were substantially different from those in previous years.

The survey was completed by online by 178 current and recent registered lobbyists (compared to 162 last year).

The profile of the respondents to this year's survey was generally equivalent to previous years. Each category was within 7 percentage points of last year's sample. Compared to last year, in this sample there was:

A higher proportion of lobbyists representing health care (31% vs. 26%); and lower from business (34% / 39%); education (15% / 18%); public agencies (23% / 26%); social services (21% / 23%); transportation (12% / 19%); public safety (10% / 11%).

The proportions were the same for lobbyists representing labor (18%) and environmental interests (23%).

Independent, contract lobbyists made up 41% of the sample, and 47% represent multiple clients, so the percentages do not add to 100%.

The table below presents a profile of those responding.

ISSUE FOCUS [Multiple Answers Allowed]	
Business	34%
Health Care	31%
Government / Public Sector	23%
Natural Resources / Environment	23%
Social/Human Services	21%
Education	15%
Labor	18%
Transportation	12%
Public Safety	10%
Other	10%
INDEPENDENT OR EMPLOYED	
Independent / Contract Lobbyist	41%
Employed by Organization	55%
Citizen / Unpaid	2%
TENURE	
1-5 years	24%
6-10 years	24%
11-20 years	20%
21+ years	32%

The Elway Poll

The Elway Poll is an independent, non-partisan analysis of public opinion in Washington and the Northwest.

PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow for proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$1000 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within two days after the interviews are completed.

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Third House Expects Larger Democratic Majorities in House & Senate Next Year

Lobbyist responding to this survey overwhelmingly think they will be working with larger Democratic majorities in both houses of the legislature next year. Three-quarters of these lobbyists (75%) expect the Democrats to add to their majority in the House and two-thirds (66%) expect more Democrats in the Senate next year.

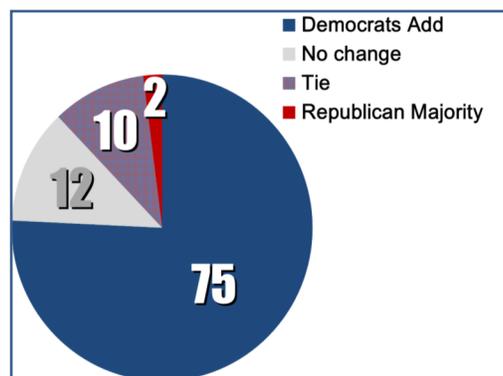
Only 1% thought the Republicans would retake the Senate, and only 2% thought the GOP would capture the House in this year's elections.

Lobbyists who had been around the longest were least likely to think the Democrats would add to their majorities—although most did. Among those in Olympia for more than 20 years, 54% thought the Democrats would gain in the Senate and 66% thought they would gain in the House.

Among those with fewer than 20 years experience, 71% thought the Democrats would gain in the Senate and 80% thought they would add to their house majority.

EXPECTATIONS FOR 2018 ELECTIONS

HOUSE



SENATE

