With the 2012 election, the executive branch landed in the "Great State of Mecklenburg," but it's not the only westward shift in state government. Over the course of two elections, long-serving legislators with leadership positions now commonly hail from points west of the Triangle. While there is plenty of talk around partisan divisions, history tells us geography matters at the legislature.

To track the shift in experience and leadership, Capstrat created a metric combining number of terms served and leadership posts held. We then took three snapshots based on election results from 2012, 2010 and 2008. These three maps mark the 68 legislators from each time period with the most combined experience and leadership.
The 2010 election set the westward shift of legislative leadership into motion. Prior to this election, a large number of the state’s longest serving legislators hailed from the Triangle to the east. Due to their long tenures in both the House and Senate, they rose to prominent leadership positions — including Speaker of the House, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and chairmen of the powerful appropriations, finance and rules committees.

Following this election, less experienced legislators from the central areas of the state were able to rise to the top tier of leadership positions. This exposed a need by constituents to build new relationships with legislative leaders who did not previously have the experience to rise to key roles inside the General Assembly.
This map based on the 2008 election shows the structure of political leadership before the dramatic partisan change of 2010. Senators and Representatives from the eastern part of the state remained in office long enough to become stalwarts of the institution. Regardless of party, note the presence of experienced leaders in Southeastern North Carolina, the Sandhills and border counties, as compared to the 2012 map.