



Highlights from the 207th Pennsylvania General Assembly Legislative Effectiveness Scores

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Executive Summary

The Center for Effective Lawmaking (CEL) is pleased to announce the release of the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) for the recently completed 207th Pennsylvania General Assembly legislative session that concluded in 2024. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective lawmakers in each party in the State House and State Senate, including many who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous General Assemblies.
- We identify those lawmakers with the longest streaks of being in our prestigious “Exceeds Expectations” category, as well as first-term lawmakers in this category.
- We find that, consistent with our published research findings, there is an overall lawmaking benefit from being in the majority party. Although some individual minority-party legislators achieved high lawmaking effectiveness, their average scores remain lower than their majority-party counterparts due to structural barriers that they face in trying to advance their agendas.
- Across both chambers, serving as a committee chair position is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. In addition, lawmaking effectiveness is a consistent trait among legislators, with several legislators appearing among the top-10 most effective lawmaking for both the 207th and the 206th General Assembly, which concluded in 2022.
- Over the past decade, minority-party legislators were largely cut out of the lawmaking process, with minority-party SLES scores decreasing over time. Democratic bills in the House dropped from nearly two dozen becoming law in 2015–16 to just one in 2021–22. After entering the House majority in 2023–24, however, more than 100 Democratic bills became law, and our research shows that divided government also created opportunities for minority-party lawmakers in both chambers.

Introduction and Methodology

The State Legislative Effectiveness Scores discussed here are based on the combination of fifteen metrics capturing the bills that each member of each state legislature sponsors, how far their bills move through the lawmaking process, and how substantial their policy proposals are. The scores are normalized to an average value of 1.0 in both the State House and the State Senate in each legislative session. More on our [methodology](#) and [scores](#) can be found at our website.

For each member of the State House and State Senate, we also identify a Benchmark Score, based on the average lawmaking effectiveness of legislators who share that legislator's majority- or minority-party status, level of seniority, and chair position on a committee. Controlling for these considerations is important in order to describe legislators on a more level playing field. For example, in the 207th Pennsylvania State House, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.33, compared to 1.64 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 2.12. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.37 in the minority party, 1.50 in the majority party, and 1.60 among committee chairs.

We then label each lawmaker as “Exceeding Expectations” for those outperforming their benchmark scores by 50% or more, “Below Expectations” for those below 50% of their benchmark, and “Meeting Expectations” for all other legislators.

Finally, within each party, we rank each member according to their SLES. This ranking is used to generate the Top Ten lists highlighted in the tables below. Given the substantial lawmaking benefit that follows from being in the majority party, ranking the entire Pennsylvania General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 207th Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Top Ten List—House Democrats (207th General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Chair Position</u>
1.	Jordan Harris (District 186)	10.13	Committee Chair
2.	Joseph Ciresi (District 146)	5.14	None
3.	Ed Neilson (District 174)	4.41	Committee Chair
4.	Steven Malagari (District 53)	4.19	None
5.	Donna Bullock (District 195)	3.83	Committee Chair
6.	Timothy Briggs (District 149)	3.73	Committee Chair
7.	Perry Warren (District 31)	3.16	None
8.	Jared Solomon (District 202)	3.05	None
9.	Christina Sappey (District 158)	3.00	None
10.	Melissa Shusterman (District 157)	2.96	None

At the top of the list is State Rep. Jordan Harris from District 186 (Philadelphia county) with a score of 10.13. In the 2023-2024 General Assembly, he was the chair of the Majority Appropriations committee and he introduced 37 bills, 33 of which received action in committee, 33 received action beyond committee, 18 passed the House, and 15 became law. He has served in the Pennsylvania House since 2013. Prior to his time in the General Assembly, Harris earned a bachelor's degree in governmental and political affairs from Millersville University and a master's degree in education from Cabrini College. He is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at Neumann University. Harris is a former teacher in the Philadelphia Public Schools and has served in city government. In addition to Representative Harris, we also see that three of the remaining nine most-effective Democratic lawmakers in the Pennsylvania House also held committee chairs.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 207th Pennsylvania House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scorers in the 207th House of Representatives among minority-party Republicans.

Topping our list is State Rep. Thomas Mehaffie of District 106 (Dauphin county), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.63. Rep. Mehaffie has been serving since 2017. He introduced 8 bills in the 207th General Assembly, 5 received action in committee, 5 received action beyond committee, 5 passed the House, and 1 became law. Before his time in the State House, Rep. Mehaffie was a township commissioner and a successful business owner. One legislator on our current list, Rep. James Struzzi, also appeared in the top-10 highest scorers among Republican legislators in the 206th General Assembly.

Top Ten List—House Republicans (207th General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Thomas Mehaffie (District 106)	1.63	4
2.	Brett Miller (District 41)	1.46	5
3.	Ryan Mackenzie (District 187)	1.22	7
4.	Joe Kerwin (District 125)	1.16	2
5.	Zachary Mako (District 183)	1.13	4
6.	Kathleen Tomlinson (District 18)	1.03	3
7.	James Marshall (District 14)	1.01	9
8.	James Struzzi (District 62)	1.00	3
9.	Timothy Bonner (District 17)	0.86	3
10.	David Zimmerman (District 99)	0.77	5

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 207th State Senate

Turning to the Pennsylvania Senate in the 207th General Assembly, where Republicans held the chamber majority, we find that nine of the top-10 most effective lawmakers in the state Senate held committee chairs.

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (207th General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Chair Position</u>
1.	Lisa Baker (District 20)	3.66	Committee Chair
2.	Scott Martin (District 13)	2.95	Committee Chair
3.	Doug Mastriano (District 33)	2.83	Committee Chair
4.	Michele Brooks (District 50)	2.61	Committee Chair
5.	Wayne Langerholc (District 35)	2.53	Committee Chair
6.	David Argall (District 29)	2.31	Committee Chair
7.	Kristin Phillips-Hill (District 28)	2.01	None
8.	Devlin Robinson (District 37)	2.01	Committee Chair
9.	Judith Ward (District 30)	1.84	Committee Chair
10.	Rosemary Brown (District 40)	1.76	Committee Chair

At the top of the list is Sen. Lisa Baker from District 20 (Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties), who had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 207th General Assembly, with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 3.66. She introduced 41 bills, 26 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 19 of which passed the Senate, and 11 of which became law. Sen. Baker has been representing the 20th District since 2007. Prior to her time in the Senate, she received a bachelor's degree in government administration from Shippensburg University in 1983.

Highly Effective Democrat Lawmakers in the 207th State Senate

The following table identifies the top five highest-scorers in the 207th Senate among minority-party Democrats.

Top Five List—Senate Democrats (207th General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Timothy Kearney (District 26)	1.14	3
2.	Vincent Hughes (District 7)	0.83	15
3.	Lisa Boscola (District 18)	0.64	13
4.	Carolyn Comitta (District 19)	0.62	2
5.	Steven Santarsiero (District 10)	0.57	3

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Sen. Timothy Kearney from District 26 (Delaware county) was ranked first in terms of his SLES score, with a score of 1.14. He was also among the top-5 most effective Democratic lawmakers in the 206th General Assembly, which concluded in 2022. In the 207th General Assembly, he introduced 20 bills, 6 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the Senate, and 4 of which became law. He has served in the

26th District since 2019. Kearney received a B.S. from the Catholic University of America and a M.Arch. from the University of Pennsylvania. He is an adjunct professor at Drexel University and has served as the mayor of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania for two terms.

Lawmakers with Long-Standing Patterns of Exceeding Expectations in Lawmaking Effectiveness

Those who significantly exceed their benchmark score (which is calculated based on a legislator's seniority and status as a majority party member and/or committee chairperson) are identified as being in our "Exceeds Expectations" category. The lists below show those Representatives and Senators with the longest active streaks of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions, continuing through (and including) the 207th General Assembly.

State Representatives with Longest Streak of "Exceeding Expectations" (through the 207th General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>LES (in 2023-2024)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Rep. Seth Grove (R-196)	8 General Assemblies	0.52	8 General Assemblies
2.	Rep. Jared Solomon (D-202)	4 General Assemblies	3.05	4 General Assemblies
3.	Rep. Joseph Ciresi (D-146)	3 General Assemblies	5.14	3 General Assemblies
4.	Rep. Kate Klunk (R-169)	3 General Assemblies	0.76	5 General Assemblies
5.	Rep. Christopher Rabb (D-200)	3 General Assemblies	1.87	4 General Assemblies
6.	Rep. Jesse Topper (R-78)	3 General Assemblies	0.63	6 General Assemblies

State Representative Seth Grove (R) from District 196 (York county) tops our list with an 8-session streak of "Exceeds Expectations." In the 207th General Assembly, he introduced 34 bills, none of which received any action in committee. His experiences in previous General Assemblies, however, pointed to steady levels of legislative success. In the 206th General Assembly, he introduced 46 bills, 15 received action in and action beyond committee, and 7 passed the House. In the 205th General Assembly, he introduced 50 bills, 11 received action in and action beyond committee, 7 passed the House, and 2 became law. He graduated from York College of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Public Administration, and he earned a master's degree in public financial management from the University of Kentucky. He has represented the 196th District since 2008.

State Senators with Longest Streak of “Exceeding Expectations” (through the 2023-2024 General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>LES (in 2023-2024)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Sen. Wayne Langerholc (R-35)	2 General Assemblies	2.53	4 General Assemblies
2.	Sen. Timothy Kearney (D-26)	2 General Assemblies	1.14	3 General Assemblies
3.	Sen. Doug Mastriano (R-33)	2 General Assemblies	2.83	3 General Assemblies

Sen. Wayne Langerholc had the longest streak of “Exceeding Expectations” in the Pennsylvania Senate with a 2-session streak. In the most recent General Assembly, he introduced 49 bills, 29 of which received action in and action beyond committee, 23 passed the Senate, and 5 became law. In the 206th Assembly, he introduced 39 bills, 26 received action in and beyond committee, 20 passed the Senate, and 10 became law. Sen. Langerholc is a graduate of Juniata College and Widener University Commonwealth Law School, and prior to serving in the Senate, he served as an Assistant District Attorney in Cambria county, an attorney in private practice, and as a Richland Township Supervisor. As noted above, he was also ranked fifth among Senate Republicans in terms of SLES scores for the 207th General Assembly.

High-Performing Freshmen

A useful way to identify lawmakers who might step into roles of greater influence in future legislative sessions is by examining first-term Representatives and Senators who received an “Exceeds Expectations” rating in their lawmaking effectiveness. These high-performing freshmen lawmakers demonstrate emerging legislative talent. Notably, in Pennsylvania, this group of high-performing freshmen is bipartisan, with strong performers coming from both the majority and minority parties. The average SLES score for the majority party is 2.36, and the average SLES score for the minority party is 0.56.

Freshmen Representatives “Exceeding Expectations” (2023-2024 General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES (in 2023-2024)</u>
1.	Rep. Lisa Borowski (D-168)	2.36
2.	Rep. Michael Cabell (R-117)	0.60
3.	Rep. Jamie Flick (R-83)	0.60
4.	Rep. Kristin Marcell (R-178)	0.56
5.	Rep. Thomas Kutz (R-87)	0.53
6.	Rep. Dane Watro (R-116)	0.52
7.	Rep. Joseph Hogan (R-142)	0.52

At the top of our list is Rep. Lisa Borowski, who was elected to the State House in 2022. Prior to that, she served on the Radnor Township School District Board in 2011, and she later ran for township commissioner and was elected president of the board of commissioners. Research on the U.S. Congress indicates that strong performance in a legislator's first term is [closely linked to future legislative success and long-term influence](#). Given this trend, we expect Rep. Borowski, and many of these Representatives will continue to shape policy and help steer their parties' legislative agendas in the years ahead.

Other Findings

In terms of broader trends, our data shows just how partisan lawmaking had become in Pennsylvania over the past decade. The average SLES of minority-party lawmakers has plummeted even as those of majority-party lawmakers have soared. This is indicative of the minority party being cut out of the lawmaking process overall. For example, in the 2015-16 term, minority-party Democrats in the House saw nearly two dozen of their proposals pass into law. By 2021-22, only one Democratic House bill became law, and only two Democratic Senate bills became law.

Finally entering the House majority in 2023-24, Democrats regained a significant seat at the table. Although most of the 386 Democratic bills passed through the House died in the Republican Senate, more than 100 of them became law. And this divided government also offered lawmaking opportunities for the minority party in each chamber, with 16 bills from House Republicans and 16 from Senate Democrats becoming law. In short, although divided government can cause partisan gridlock, there is some evidence that it has been promoting an increase in working across the aisle in Pennsylvania.

Conclusion

The 207th Pennsylvania General Assembly demonstrated consistent patterns in legislative effectiveness, with experienced legislators, committee chairs, and majority-party members continuing to hold a distinct advantage in advancing their policy agendas. Across both chambers, many of the most effective lawmakers continued their high performance from previous sessions, indicating a durable capacity for lawmaking among key figures. Additionally, several first-term and minority-party legislators exceeded expectations in their lawmaking effectiveness, highlighting emerging leadership and the value of strategic engagement despite structural disadvantages that might follow from being a member of the minority party. These findings underscore the importance of institutional positions and experiences in shaping legislative outcomes in Pennsylvania.