



Highlights from the 103rd Illinois General Assembly (2023-2024) 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 103rd Illinois General Assembly legislative session. 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 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 lawmakers for both the 103rd and 102nd General Assembly.

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 103rd Illinois State House, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.54, compared to 1.24 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.19. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.60 in the minority party, 1.18 in the majority party, and 1.21 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 Illinois General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 103rd State House

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 103rd State House. Unsurprisingly, given the power of committee chairs, eight of the top ten held these important positions.

Top Ten List—House Democrats (103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Emanuel “Chris” Welch (District 7)*	18.73	None
2.	Jay Hoffman (District 113)	3.53	None
3.	Katie Stuart (District 112)	2.27	Chair
4.	Anna Moeller (District 43)	2.23	Chair
5.	Kelly Cassidy (District 14)	2.07	Chair
6.	Camille Lilly (District 78)	1.97	Chair
7.	Will Guzzardi (District 39)	1.90	Chair
8.	Marcus Evans (District 33)	1.88	Chair
9.	Curtis Tarver (District 25)	1.80	Chair
10.	Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz (District 17)	1.71	Chair

***Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives—one of the “Four Tops”**

At the top of the list is State Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch from District 7 (Cook County) with a score of 18.73. He is also in our “Exceeds Expectations” category for outperforming his benchmark score by 50% for four consecutive General Assemblies. In the 103rd General Assembly, he introduced 865 bills, 865 received action in committee, 865 received action beyond committee, and 1 passed the House. He has served in the Illinois House since 2013 and was voted Speaker of

the House in 2021. He attended Northwestern University, graduating with a B.A. degree in 1993, and the John Marshall Law School, graduating with a J.D. degree in 1997. He worked in private practice and served on the Proviso Township High School District Board of Education prior to his election to the General Assembly. Two other Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scores in the 102nd General Assembly, Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-113) and Rep. Katie Stuart (D-112).

Speaker Welch’s high State Legislative Effectiveness Score follows directly from him introducing notably more bills than any other member of the Illinois House. The next highest-scoring legislator, Representative Jay Hoffman introduced nearly 85% fewer bills than Speaker Welch, many of which successfully advanced further in the legislative process following introduction. This incidence of the Speaker introducing notably more bills than rank-and-file legislators is not confined to Speaker Welch in the 103rd General Assembly. More broadly considered, the Illinois House and Senate have a history of the majority and minority party leaders in each chamber, collectively referred to as the “Four Tops,” introducing substantially more bills than rank and file legislators, with most of those sponsored bills not advancing past the introductory stage. Introducing such a high number of bills leads to these legislators having such high State Legislative Effectiveness Scores, compared to their rank-and-file peers, even if they are not effective at advancing any of their bills through the lawmaking process.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 103rd Illinois House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scorers in the 103rd House of Representatives among minority-party Republicans.

Topping our list is State Rep. Tony McCombie of District 89 (Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago counties), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 8.95. Rep. McCombie is the Illinois House Minority Leader and serves on five committees and four subcommittees. She has been serving as a state representative since 2017. She introduced 426 bills in the 103rd General Assembly, 398 received action in committee, 387 received action beyond committee, 6 passed the House, and 5 became law. Prior to her election to Illinois House, McCombie served as Mayor of Savanna, Illinois, and as a Savanna Councilwoman. Outside of her role in the Illinois House of Representatives, McCombie owns and operates Blue Appraisals and is self-employed as a realtor with Mel Foster Company. Five Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scores in the 102nd General Assembly, Rep. Tony McCombie (R-89), Rep. Joe Sosnowski (R-69), Rep. Charles Meier (R-109), Rep. Norrine Hammond (R-94), and Rep. Patrick Windhorst (R-117).

Top Ten List—House Republicans (103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Tony McCombie (District 89)*	8.95	4
2.	Norine Hammond (District 94)	1.05	7
3.	Charles Meier (District 109)	0.76	6
4.	Daniel Swanson (District 71)	0.74	4

5.	Amy Elik (District 111)	0.70	2
6.	Patrick Windhorst (District 117)	0.67	3
7.	John Cabello (District 90)	0.59	1
8.	Joe Sosnowski (District 69)	0.57	7
9.	Jeff Keicher (District 70)	0.53	3
10.	Bradley Fritts (District 74)	0.50	1

***Minority Leader of the Illinois House of Representatives—one of the “Four Tops”**

Highly Effective Democrat Lawmakers in the 103rd State Senate

Top Ten List—Senate Democrats (103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Don Harmon (District 39)*	10.42	None
2.	Laura Fine (District 9)	2.28	Chair
3.	Julie Morrison (District 29)	1.98	Chair
4.	Ram Villivalam (District 8)	1.86	Chair
5.	David Koehler (District 46)	1.69	None
6.	William Cunningham (District 18)	1.66	None
7.	Laura Murphy (District 28)	1.54	Chair
8.	Sara Feigenholtz (District 6)	1.46	Chair
9.	Mike Simmons (District 7)	1.44	Chair
10.	Elgie Sims (District 17)	1.44	Chair

***President of the Illinois Senate—one of the “Four Tops”**

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Sen. Don Harmon from District 39 (Cook, DuPage counties) was ranked first in terms of his SLES score, with a score of 10.42. He was also among the top-10 Democratic highest scorers in the 102nd General Assembly. He has served in the 39th District since 2003 and was elected as the President of the Illinois Senate in 2020. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Knox College and his J.D. and M.B.A. from the University of Chicago. After law school, he served in Springfield on the House legal staff and in 2000, and he was nominated to serve as the Democratic Party of Oak Park as a Committeeman before his election to the State Senate.

In the 103rd General Assembly, we also find that seven of the top-10 Democratic State Senators are also committee chairs. Seven Senators on the list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 102nd General Assembly. These Senators are Sen. Don Harmon (D-39), Sen. Laura Murphy (D-28), Sen. Ram Villivalam (D-8), Sen. Julie Morrison (D-29), Sen. Laura Fine (D-9), Sen. Sara Feigenholtz (D-6), and Sen. Elgie Sims (D-17).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 103rd State Senate

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	John Curran (District 41)*	3.70	4
2.	Jil Tracy (District 50)	0.91	4
3.	Chapin Rose (District 51)	0.73	6
4.	Susan Rezin (District 38)	0.67	7
5.	Thomas Bennett (District 53)	0.60	1
6.	Steve McClure (District 54)	0.60	3
7.	Dan McConchie (District 26)	0.58	4
8.	Neil Anderson (District 47)	0.49	5
9.	Dale Fowler (District 59)	0.49	4
10.	Donald DeWitte (District 33)	0.43	3

***Minority Leader of the Illinois Senate—one of the “Four Tops”**

Turning to the Republican Senators in the 103rd General Assembly, we find that there is substantial overlap between the highest performers on the top-10 list for the 103rd General Assembly and the preceding top-10 list for Republican legislators in the 102nd General Assembly, with Sen. Neil Anderson (R-47), Sen. John Curran (R-41), Sen. Don McConchie (R-26), Sen. Susan Rezin (R-38), Sen. Donald DeWitte (R-33), and Sen. Chapin Rose (R-51) appearing on both lists.

Sen. John Curran from District 41 (DuPage, Cook, and Will counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 103rd General Assembly, with a score of 3.70. He introduced 251 bills, 236 received action in committee, 234 received action beyond committee, 2 passed the Senate, and 1 became law. Sen. Curran has been representing the 41st District since 2017 and was elected as the Senate Minority Leader in 2022. Curran received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and his law degree from Northern Illinois University College of Law. He worked for 19 years as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, and he now works as an attorney at a private law firm.

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 103rd General Assembly.

State Representatives with Longest Streak of “Exceeding Expectations” (through the 103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>LES (in 103rd)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-113)	5 General Assemblies	3.53	6 General Assemblies*
2.	Rep. Emanuel Welch (D-7)	4 General Assemblies	2.35	6 General Assemblies
3.	Rep. Katie Stuart (D-112)	3 General Assemblies	2.27	4 General Assemblies

***Representative Hoffman had served in 6 successive General Assemblies from 2013-2024; he had also served in 7 successive General Assemblies from 1997-2010.**

State Representative Jay Hoffman (D) from District 113 (Madison, St. Clair counties) tops our list with a 5-session streak of “Exceeds Expectations.” In the 103rd General Assembly, he introduced 156 bills, 64 received action in committee, 47 received action beyond committee, 32 passed the House, and 25 became law. He has represented the 113th District since 2012 but has served on and off since 1991. He earned his B.S. in finance from Illinois State University and he later graduated from Saint Louis University School of Law. He served as an assistant state's attorney in St. Clair County and later as director of probation and court services in the 20th Judicial Circuit.

State Senators with Longest Streak of “Exceeding Expectations” (through the 103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>LES (in 103rd)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Sen. Don Harmon (D- 39)	4 General Assemblies	10.42	11 General Assemblies
2.	Sen. Laura Fine (D-9)	3 General Assemblies	2.28	3 General Assemblies
3.	Sen. Ram Villivalam (D- 8)	3 General Assemblies	1.86	3 General Assemblies

Sen. Don Harmon had the longest streak of “Exceeding Expectations,” with a 4-session streak. As noted above, he was also ranked first among Senate Democrats in terms of SLES scores.

High-Performing Freshmen

A useful way to identify lawmakers who might step into roles of greater influence is by examining first-term Representatives and Senators who received an “Exceeds Expectations” rating. These high-performing freshmen lawmakers demonstrate emerging legislative talent.

Freshmen Senators “Exceeding Expectations” (103rd General Assembly)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES (in 157th)</u>
1.	Sen. Rachel Ventura (D-43)	1.28
2.	Sen. Thomas Bennett (R-53)	0.60

The top-performing freshman Democrat was State Senator Rachel Ventura (D-43), with a SLES score of 1.28. Sen. Rachel Ventura received a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Benedictine University and an associate's degree in Biology from Tidewater Community College in Virginia, and she has experience as an actuary, naturalist, veterinary assistant, substitute teacher and business director. The top freshman Republican, State Senator Thomas Bennett (D-55), earned a score of 0.60, placing him fifth among Republican lawmakers in the 103rd General Assembly.

Conclusion

The 103rd Illinois 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. These findings underscore the importance of institutional positions and experiences in shaping legislative outcomes in Illinois.