Highlights from the 2019-2022 Alabama Legislature 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 2019-2022 Alabama Legislature 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 House of Representatives and State Senate, including many who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous legislative sessions.
- We identify those lawmakers with the longest streaks of being in our prestigious "Above 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 2019-2022 and 2015-2018 legislative sessions.

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 House of Representatives 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 House of Representatives 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 2019-2022 Alabama House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.62, compared to 1.13 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.46. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.75 in the minority party, 1.08 in the majority party, and 1.39 among committee chairs.

We then label each lawmaker as "Above 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 Alabama State Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2019-2022 Alabama House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2019-2022 House of Representatives. Three of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—House Republicans (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	**LES**	**Committee Chair**
1.	**Jim Hill (District 50)**	3.64	Chair
2.	**Danny Garrett (District 44)**	3.20	None
3.	**Steve Clouse (District 93)**	3.03	Chair
4.	**Alan Baker (District 66)**	2.78	None
5.	**Rex Reynolds (District 21)**	2.68	None
6.	**David Faulkner (District 46)**	2.55	None
7.	**Kyle South (District 16)**	2.50	None
8.	**Chip Brown (District 105)**	2.25	None
9.	**Kerry Rich (District 26)**	2.20	Chair
10.	**Matt Simpson (District 96)**	2.19	None

At the top of the list is Representative Jim Hill from District 50 (St. Clair County) with a score of 3.64. In the 2019-2022 legislative session, he introduced 65 bills, 43 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 30 passed the House, and 13 became law. He has served in the Alabama House of Representatives since 2014. He received his bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University and his J.D. from Samford University. He served as a circuit judge for Alabama's

30th Judiciary Circuit. Two Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scores in the 2015-2018 legislative session: Representative Steve Clouse (District 93) and Representative Kyle South (District 16).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2019-2022 Alabama House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scorers in the 2019-2022 House of Representatives among minority-party Democrats.

Top Ten List—House Democrats (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Seniority
1.	**Laura Hall (District 19)**	1.81	7
2.	**Roderick Scott (District 55)**	1.52	4
3.	**Merika Coleman (District 57)**	1.41	5
4.	**Artis McCampbell (District 71)**	1.17	4
5.	**Christopher England (District 70)**	1.14	4
6.	**Prince Chestnut (District 67)**	1.01	2
7.	**Kelvin Lawrence (District 69)**	1.00	2
8.	**Jeremy Gray (District 83)**	0.90	1
9.	**Neil Rafferty (District 54)**	0.89	1
10.	**Pebblin Warren (District 82)**	0.88	5

Topping our list is Representative Laura Hall of District 19 (Madison County), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.81. She introduced 61 bills in the 2019-2022 legislative session, 24 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 11 passed the House of Representatives, and 5 became law. Prior to being elected to the Alabama state legislature, Representative Hall was an administrator at Calhoun Community College and a teacher at J.O. Johnson High School. She received her bachelor's degree in biology from Morris College and a master's degree in science education from Ohio State University. She was first elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1994. Four Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scores in the 2015-2018 legislative session: Representative Laura Hall (District 19), Representative Artis McCampbell (District 71), Representative Christopher England (District 70), and Representative Pebblin Warren (District 82).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2019-2022 State Senate

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Committee Chair
1.	**Arthur Orr (District 3)**	3.15	Chair
2.	**Clyde Chambliss (District 30)**	3.00	Chair

	Name		Seniority
3.	**Andrew Jones (District 10)**	1.93	Chair
4.	**Thomas Whatley (District 27)**	1.83	None
5.	**Greg Albritton (District 22)**	1.71	Chair
6.	**Will Barfoot (District 25)**	1.60	None
7.	**Steve Livingston (District 8)**	1.30	Chair
8.	**Tim Melson (District 1)**	1.29	Chair
9.	**Shay Shelnutt (District 17)**	1.20	Chair
10.	**Gerald Allen (District 21)**	1.13	Chair

Among Republicans in the State Senate, Sen. Arthur Orr from District 3 (Limestone, Madison, and Morgan counties) was ranked first in terms of his SLES score, with a score of 3.15. He was also among the top-10 most effective Republican lawmakers in the State Senate in the 2015-2018 legislative session. In the 2019-2022 session he introduced 94 bills, 80 received action in committee, 81 received action beyond committee, 63 passed the Senate, and 37 became law. He has represented the 3rd District in the State Senate since 2006. Prior to being elected to the State Senate he earned a bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University and a J.D. from the University of Alabama Law School. After graduation he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal. When he returned, he worked as a lawyer and served as the president of several non-profit organizations.

In the 2019-2022 legislative session, we also find that eight of the top-10 Republican State Senators are also committee chairs. Six Senators on the list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2015-2018 legislative session. These Senators are Sen. Arthur Orr (District 3), Sen. Clyde Chambliss (District 30), Sen. Thomas Whatley (District 27), Sen. Greg Albritton (District 22), Sen. Steve Livingston (District 8), and Sen. Gerald Allen (District 21).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2019-2022 State Senate

Top Three List—Senate Democrats (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Seniority
1.	**Rodger Smitherman (District 18)**	1.73	7
2.	**William Beasley (District 28)**	1.48	3
3.	**Bobby Singleton (District 24)**	1.36	5

Sen. Rodger Smitherman from District 18 (Jefferson County) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2019-2022 legislative session, with a score of 1.73. He introduced 88 bills, 55 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 32 passed the Senate, and 10 became law. Sen. Smitherman has been representing the 18th District since 1994. Sen. Smitherman earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Montevallo and a J.D. from Miles Law School. He was the President Pro Tempore of the Alabama Senate from 2009 to 2010.

Turning to the Democratic Senators in the 2019-2022 legislative session, we find that there is substantial overlap between the highest performers on the top-3 list for the 2019-2022 legislative session and the preceding top-3 list for Democratic legislators in the 2015-2018 legislative session, with all three Senators appearing on both lists.

Lawmakers with Long-Standing Patterns of "Above Expectations"

Those who significantly exceed their benchmark score (which is calculated based on their seniority and status as a majority party member and/or committee chairperson) are identified as being in our "Above Expectations" category. The lists below identify the Representatives and Senators with the longest active streaks of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2019-2022 legislative session.

State Representatives with Longest Streak of "Above Expectations" (through the 2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	Streak	SLES (2019-2022)	Seniority
1.	Roderick Scott (D-55)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.52	4 Legislative Sessions
2.	Artis McCampbell (D-71)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.17	4 Legislative Sessions
3.	Christopher England (D-70)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.14	4 Legislative Sessions

Representative Roderick Scott (D) of District 55 (Jefferson County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," 3 legislative sessions, with a SLES score in the most recent legislative session of 1.52. Representative Scott was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 2006, and served until 2022. During the 2019-2022 legislative session, he introduced 35 bills, 16 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 8 of which passed the House, and 7 of his sponsored bills became law.

State Senators with Longest Streak of "Above Expectations" (through the 2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	Streak	SLES (2019-2022)	Seniority
1.	Arthur Orr (R-3)	4 Legislative Sessions	3.15	4 Legislative Sessions

Turning to the State Senate, Senator Arthur Orr (R) of District 3 (Limestone, Madison, and Morgan counties) exceeded expectations for 4 consecutive legislative sessions.

High-Performing Freshmen

One way to identify future legislative leaders is to identify freshman Representatives and Senators who earned an "Above Expectations" rating in their first term. For freshman legislators, their initial scores are compared to benchmarks for newcomers—so when a freshman outperforms their cohort, it can reveal strong political acumen, the ability to navigate legislative procedures quickly, and skill in coalition-building or policy entrepreneurship. These traits often correlate with future leadership roles. Our research on the U.S. Congress suggests that legislators who perform well early on are more likely to be selected for committee chairs or leadership positions, and influence major legislation in subsequent terms. Hence, identifying high-performing freshmen can offer early signals of who might rise through the ranks.

Freshmen Representatives "Above Expectations" (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	**SLES (2019-2022)**
1.	**Rex Reynolds (R-21)**	2.68
2.	**Matt Simpson (R-96)**	2.19
3.	**Chip Brown (R-105)**	2.25
4.	**Jeremy Gray (D-83)**	0.90

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectation" score during his freshman term was Representative Rex Reynolds (Madison County) with a score of 2.68. He was elected in 2018. He earned a degree from Auburn University at Montgomery. During the 2019-2022 legislative session, he introduced 39 bills, 33 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 24 of which passed the House, and 14 of his sponsored bills became law.

Freshmen Senators "Above Expectations" (2019-2022 Legislative Session)

	Name	**SLES (2019-2022)**
1.	**Will Barfoot (R-25)**	1.60

The top-performing freshman in the State Senate was Senator Will Barfoot (R) from District 25 (Crenshaw, Elmore, and Montgomery counties), with a SLES score of 1.60, ranking him sixth overall among Republican Senators in the 2019-2022 legislative session. He earned his bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a J.D. from Jones School of Law. He works as an attorney and co-founded a personal injury law firm in Montgomery, Alabama. During the 2019-2022 legislative session, he introduced 55 bills, 39 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 31 of which passed the Senate, and 24 of his sponsored bills became law.

Conclusion

The 2019-2022 Alabama legislative session 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. These findings underscore the importance of institutional positions and experiences in shaping legislative outcomes in Alabama.