



Highlights from the 123rd Indiana General Assembly Legislative Effectiveness Scores

Craig Volden and Alan E. Wiseman, Co-Directors, Center for Effective Lawmaking

Paige Higginson-Rollins, Program Director for State Legislatures, Center for Effective Lawmaking

Caroline Clements, Program Specialist for State Legislatures, Center for Effective Lawmaking

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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 123rd Indiana General Assembly legislative session. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective legislators in the majority party in both chambers, the top-10 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top-5 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the Senate. Many lawmakers continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous legislative session.
- 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. This is not a new phenomenon in Indiana. Prior to the 2023-2024 legislative session, lawmakers from the majority party (Republicans) consistently received higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better outcomes in advancing their legislative agenda into law. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, Republicans continued to utilize their structural advantages to advance far more of their own bills than those of Democrats, in both the House and the Senate.
- Across both chambers, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. Eight of the ten most effective lawmakers in the House of Representatives and nine of the ten most effective lawmakers in the Senate within the majority party were committee chairs during the 123rd Indiana General Assembly.
- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one legislative session are likely to remain effective lawmakers across sessions, as several legislators appear among

the top-10 and top-5 most effective lawmakers lists in both the 2023-2024 and 2021-2022 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 2023-2024 Indiana House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.40 compared to 1.25 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.81. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.48 in the minority party, 1.13 in the majority party, and 1.45 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 lists of top performers highlighted in the tables below. Given the substantial lawmaking benefit that follows from being in the majority party, ranking the entire Indiana General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Indiana House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives. Eight of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—House Republicans (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>LES</u> | <u>Committee Chair</u> |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Jim Pressel (District 20) | 3.76 | Chair |
| 2. | Robert Behning (District 91) | 3.41 | Chair |
| 3. | Wendy McNamara (District 76) | 3.00 | Chair |
| 4. | Edmond Soliday (District 4) | 2.70 | Chair |
| 5. | Bradford Barrett (District 56) | 2.44 | Chair |

| | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 6. | Matthew Lehman (District 79) | 2.36 | None |
| 7. | Doug Miller (District 48) | 2.35 | Chair |
| 8. | Jake Teshka (District 7) | 2.32 | None |
| 9. | Timothy Wesco (District 21) | 2.29 | Chair |
| 10. | Chris Jeter (District 88) | 2.28 | Chair |

At the top of the list is Representative Jim Pressel from District 20 (LaPorte and St. Joseph counties) with a score of 3.76. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 15 bills, 11 of which received action in committee, beyond committee, and passed the House, and 10 of which became law.

Rep. Pressel was born and raised in LaPorte County and has served in the Indiana House of Representatives since 2016. He owns Pressel Enterprises Inc., which specializes in homebuilding and renovation in Northwest Indiana. Rep. Pressel is involved in the Indiana Builders Association, and he has helped build trade programs at New Prairie High School to give students construction experience.

Six Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Jim Pressel (District 20), Rep. Robert Behning (District 91), Rep. Wendy McNamara (District 76), Rep. Edmond Soliday (District 4), Rep. Matthew Lehman (District 79), and Rep. Timothy Wesco (District 21).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Indiana House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top-ten highest-scorers in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives among minority-party Democrats.

Top Ten List—House Democrats (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>LES</u> | <u>Seniority</u> |
|------------|--|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Mitch Gore (District 89) | 1.39 | 2 |
| 2. | Maureen Bauer (District 6) | 1.10 | 2 |
| 2. | Justin Moed (District 97) | 1.10 | 6 |
| 4. | Blake Johnson (District 100) | 0.73 | 3 |
| 5. | Vernon Smith (District 14) | 0.68 | 17 |
| 6. | Victoria Garcia Wilburn (District 32) | 0.63 | 1 |
| 7. | Mike Andrade (District 12) | 0.55 | 2 |
| 7. | Gregory Porter (District 96) | 0.55 | 16 |
| 9. | Earl Harris (District 2) | 0.54 | 4 |
| 10 | Rita Fleming (District 71) | 0.52 | 3 |
| 10. | Carolyn Jackson (District 1) | 0.52 | 3 |

Topping our list is Representative Mitch Gore of District 89 (Marion County), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.39. He introduced 15 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 3 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, passed the House, and became law.

Rep. Gore has served in the House of Representatives since 2020 and is the Assistant Minority Whip. Currently, he is a Captain with the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, focusing on community development. He previously worked in community development for the City of Indianapolis, focusing on neighborhood improvements.

Five Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Justin Moed (District 97), Rep. Vernon Smith (District 14), Rep. Gregory Porter (District 96), Rep. Mike Andrade (District 12), and Rep. Earl Harris (District 2).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Indiana State Senate

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 State Senate. Nine of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>LES</u> | <u>Committee Chair</u> |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Eric Koch (District 44) | 3.28 | Chair |
| 2. | Aaron Freeman (District 32) | 2.90 | Chair |
| 3. | Linda Rogers (District 11) | 2.73 | Chair |
| 4. | Jean Leising (District 42) | 2.45 | Chair |
| 5. | Rick Niemeyer (District 6) | 2.04 | Chair |
| 6. | Jeff Raatz (District 27) | 2.03 | Chair |
| 7. | Elizabeth Brown (District 15) | 1.90 | Chair |
| 8. | Travis Holdman (District 19) | 1.89 | Chair |
| 9. | Michael Crider (District 28) | 1.79 | Chair |
| 10. | Mike Gaskill (District 25) | 1.55 | None |

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator Eric Koch from District 44 (Brown, Jackson, Lawrence, and Orange counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 3.28. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 22 bills, 20 of which received action in committee, beyond committee, and passed the Senate, and 17 became law.

Sen. Koch previously served in the Indiana House of Representatives from 2002 until his election to the Senate in 2016. Sen. Koch holds a B.A. from Georgetown University and a J.D. from Indiana University. Since 1989, he has been in private practice. Throughout his career, he has participated

in several public service organizations, including the Indiana Courts, the Indiana Supreme Court Committee, and the Indiana Public Defender Commission. In addition, he frequently serves as a faculty member in continuing legal education courses at the Indiana State Bar. He is currently employed at Gutwein Law, where he practices business law.

Seven legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Eric Koch (District 44), Sen. Aaron Freeman (District 32), Sen. Linda Rogers (District 11), Sen. Jean Leising (District 42), Sen. Jeff Raatz (District 27), Sen. Travis Holdman (District 19), Sen. Michael Crider (District 28).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Indiana State Senate

The following table identifies the top five highest-scorers in the 2023-2024 State Senate among minority-party Democrats.

Top Five List—Senate Democrats (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>LES</u> | <u>Seniority</u> |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Rodney Pol (District 4) | 0.98 | 2 |
| 2. | Shelli Yoder (District 40) | 0.72 | 2 |
| 3. | Fady Qaddoura (District 30) | 0.66 | 2 |
| 4. | Jean Breaux (District 34) | 0.52 | 8 |
| 5. | Lonnie Randolph (District 2) | 0.47 | 8 |

Senator Rodney Pol from District 4 (Porter and LaPorte counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session, with a score of 0.98. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 22 bills, 4 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 3 of which passed the Senate, and 2 of which became law.

Sen. Pol has served in the Senate since 2021. He holds a J.D. from Indiana University and began his career working in public agencies across Indianapolis, including the Indiana Department of Education and Indiana Public Defender’s Office. In 2014, Sen. Pol returned to Northwest Indiana and assumed the position of City Attorney for the City of Gary, which he still holds today. When elected to the Senate, he was the first Latino to serve in the Indiana State Senate and is currently the youngest serving member. Sen. Pol serves on the Justice Reinvestment Advisory Council and the Indiana Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs.

Sen. Qaddoura (District 30) was the only Senator to appear on both the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 lists of the top-5 most effective Democratic lawmakers in the Indiana Senate.

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 with the longest

active streaks of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2023-2024 legislative session.

**State Representatives with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations”
(through the 2023-2024 Legislative Session)**

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>Streak</u> | <u>SLES (2023-2024)</u> | <u>Seniority</u> |
|----|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Matthew Lehman (R-79) | 4 Legislative Sessions | 2.36 | 8 Legislative Sessions |
| 2. | Edward Clere (R-73) | 4 Legislative Sessions | 1.93 | 8 Legislative Sessions |

Representative Matthew Lehman (R) of District 79 (Adams, Jay, and Wells counties) had the longest streak of “Above Expectations” with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 2.36 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. He has also appeared on the top-10 most effective Indiana Representatives list since the 2021-2022 legislative session. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Lehman proposed 10 bills, 8 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, passed the House, and became law.

Rep. Lehman is a former Adams County councilor. He holds an A.D. in aviation technology from Vincennes University and a Certificate for Insurance Counseling. Rep. Lehman is president and co-owner of Bixler Insurance Inc., an independent insurance agency based in Berne. In the community, he is a member of Rotary International and sits on the Board of Directors for the Swiss Retirement Community.

**State Senator with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations”
(through the 2023-2024 Legislative Session)**

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>Streak</u> | <u>SLES (2023-2024)</u> | <u>Seniority</u> |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Eric Koch (R-44) | 4 Legislative Sessions | 3.28 | 4 Legislative Sessions |

Senator Eric Koch (R) of District 44 (Brown, Jackson, Lawrence, and Orange counties) had the longest streak of “Above Expectations,” with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 3.28 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. He has also appeared on the top-10 most effective Indiana State Senators list since the 2017-2018 legislative session.

High-Performing Freshmen

One way to identify future legislative leaders is to identify freshmen 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 to 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” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

| | <u>Name</u> | <u>SLES (2023-2024)</u> |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Kendell Culp (R-16) | 2.14 |
| 2. | Jennifer Meltzer (R-74) | 1.76 |
| 3. | Victoria Garcia Wilburn (D-32) | 0.63 |

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Republican Representative Kendell Culp (Jasper, Pulaski, Starke, and White counties) with a score of 2.14.

During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Culp introduced 12 bills, 6 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, passed the House, and became law. Rep. Culp is a Purdue University graduate and a full-time soybean, corn, wheat, and cattle farmer. He currently serves as the vice president of the Indiana Farm Bureau. Outside of farming, Rep. Culp has participated in the Jasper County Drainage Board, the Jasper County Economic Development Board, and the Rensselaer School Board.

Other findings

In terms of broader patterns, partisanship continues to be strongly associated with lawmaking in Indiana. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the scores for minority-party members in the Indiana House of Representatives have been lower still, averaging around 0.4 in the House and only slightly higher in the Senate.

While Democrats are disadvantaged at lawmaking, they have not been completely shut out of the legislative process, although nearly so. For example, in the 2023-2024 term, Democratic legislators introduced 24 bills that became law. In contrast, the number of laws sponsored by Republicans in that term totaled 399. This approximately 15:1 ratio is significantly out of proportion to the number of seats the parties hold in the chambers, and well beyond what is seen in most legislatures across the country.

Conclusion

The 123rd Indiana General Assembly 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 Indiana.