



Highlights from the 2023-2024 Michigan Legislature 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

3/18/2026

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 2023-2024 Michigan 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, along with the top-10 most effective lawmakers in the Democratic Party, and the top-5 most effective Republican lawmakers in the State Senate. Many lawmakers continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous legislative sessions.
- We identify first-term lawmakers in our prestigious “Above Expectations” category.
- We find that, consistent with our published research findings, there is an overall lawmaking benefit from being in the majority party. Given their first period of unified government in decades, Democrats in the House, Senate, and governorship combined to pass a substantial agenda. Indeed, Michigan Democrats moved nearly as many of their bills to law over the 2023-2024 term as they were able to advance across the entire previous decade in the minority party.
- 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 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 Michigan House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.31, compared to 1.64 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.93. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.23 in the minority party, 1.69 in the majority party, and 1.79 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 Michigan State Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

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

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Penelope Tsernoglou (District 75)	3.56	Chair
2.	Felicia Brabec (District 33)	3.55	None
3.	Stephanie Young (District 16)	3.44	Chair
4.	Kara Hope (District 74)	3.31	Chair
5.	Kristian Grant (District 82)	3.03	None
6.	Kelly Breen (District 21)	3.02	Chair
7.	Julie Rogers (District 41)	2.93	Chair
8.	Phil Skaggs (District 80)	2.38	None
9.	Amos O’Neal (District 94)	2.29	None
10.	Brenda Carter (District 53)	2.29	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Penelope Tsernoglou from District 75 (Clinton, Ingham, Shiawassee counties) with a score of 3.56. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 45 bills, 31 of which received action beyond committee, 22 of which passed the House of Representatives, and 12 became law. The 2023-2024 term was her freshman term in the Michigan House of Representatives, where she was the Chair of the House Elections Committee. In the

2023-2024 session, the Elections Committee engaged with several election-related policy reforms, as the result of changes to the Michigan State constitution, which was amended in the fall of 2022. Representative Tsernoglou received her bachelor’s degree in sociology and psychology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and a J.D. from the Detroit College of Law. She worked as a victim’s advocate and as an attorney in Lansing, MI.

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

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Graham Filler (District 93)	1.55	3
2.	Curtis VanderWall (District 102)	1.25	2
3.	Mike Mueller (District 72)	0.70	3
4.	John Roth (District 104)	0.68	2
5.	Pat Outman (District 91)	0.65	2
6.	Matthew Bierlein (District 97)	0.65	1
7.	Greg VanWoerkom (District 88)	0.63	3
8.	Joseph Aragona (District 60)	0.63	1
9.	Douglas “Doug” Wozniak (District 59)	0.61	3
10.	Luke Meerman (District 89)	0.57	3

Topping our list is Representative Graham Filler of District 93 (Clinton, Gratiot, Ionia, Montcalm, and Saginaw counties), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.55. He introduced 29 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 11 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 9 passed the House, and 6 became law. He received his undergraduate degree from Miami University and a J.D. from Detroit Mercy Law School. Prior to running for office, he was an assistant attorney general for the state of Michigan. He was first elected to office in 2018 and did not seek reelection after the 2023-2024 term.

Only one Republican Representative on our current list was also among the top-10 highest scores in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Representative Graham Filler (District 93).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 State Senate

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 Senate.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Sarah Anthony (District 21)	3.03	Chair
2.	Samir “Sam” Singh (District 28)	2.53	Chair
3.	Jeff Irwin (District 15)	2.39	Chair
4.	Kevin Hertel (District 12)	2.32	Chair
5.	Mary Cavanagh (District 6)	2.14	Chair
6.	Stephanie Chang (District 3)	1.96	Chair
7.	Jeremy Moss (District 7)	1.95	Chair
8.	Veronica Klinefelt (District 11)	1.95	Chair
9.	Sylvia Santana (District 2)	1.87	None
10.	John Cherry (District 27)	1.82	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Senator Sarah Anthony from District 21 (Eaton County) was ranked first in terms of her SLES score, with a score of 3.03. In the 2023-2024 session, she introduced 60 bills, 44 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 43 passed the Senate, and 19 became law. She has represented the 21st District in the State Senate since 2023. Prior to being elected to the State Senate, she served in the House of Representatives from 2018 to 2022. She graduated from Central Michigan University with a B.S. in political science, and she earned an M.P.A. from Western Michigan University.

In the 2023-2024 legislative session, we also find that nine of the top-10 Democratic State Senators were also committee chairs.

Four Senators on the list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session. These Senators are Sen. Jeff Irwin (District 15), Sen. Stephanie Chang (District 3), Sen. Jeremy Moss (District 7), and Sen. Sylvia Santana (District 2).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 State Senate

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Ed McBroom (District 38)	0.60	3
2.	John Damoose (District 37)	0.46	1
3.	Dan Lauwers (District 25)	0.38	3
4.	Roger Hauck (District 34)	0.33	1
5.	Ruth Johnson (District 24)	0.32	3

Senator Ed McBroom from District 38 (Iger, Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, and Schoolcraft, Chippewa, and Mackinac counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session, with a score of 0.60. He introduced 26 bills, 10 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 8 passed the Senate, and 2 became law. Sen. McBroom has represented the 38th District since 2019. He earned a degree in music education and social studies from Northern Michigan University. Before entering politics, he was a fourth-generation dairy farmer and served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 2011 to 2016. Sen. McBroom was also among the top-five most effective Republican lawmakers in the Senate in the 2021-2022 legislative session.

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” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Penelope Tsernoglou (D-75)	3.56
2.	Kristian Grant (D-82)	3.03
3.	Phil Skaggs (D-80)	2.38
4.	Matthew Bierlein (R-97)	0.65
5.	Joseph Aragona (R-60)	0.63
6.	Dave Prestin (R-108)	0.52

Consistent with our comment above, the State Representative with the highest “Above Expectations” score during her freshman term was Representative Penelope Tsernoglou (Clinton, Ingham, Shiawassee counties) with a score of 3.56, which also ranked her first overall among all Democratic Representatives in lawmaking effectiveness in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Freshmen Senators “Above Expectations” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Sarah Anthony (D-21)	3.03
2.	John Damoose (R-37)	0.46

The top-performing freshman in the State Senate was Senator Sarah Anthony (D) from District 21 (Eaton County), with a SLES score of 3.03, which also ranked her first in lawmaking effectiveness among all Democratic Senators in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, partisanship is strongly associated with lawmaking in Michigan. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the scores for minority-party members (Republicans) in the Michigan State Legislature averaged only half that level, sitting about 0.3 in the 2023-24 term.

A good portion of that divide comes from Democrats controlling both chambers and the governorship for the first time in decades. Over the prior decade, Republicans held the majority in both chambers, leading to a large pent-up set of proposals from Democrats. For example, in the decade from 2013-2022, only 547 bills proposed by Democrats became law, about one-sixth of the number of Republican bills becoming law. But when in the majority, Democrats in 2023-2024 were able to advance 534 of their bills to law, nearly as many as in the entire prior decade. This left little time or room for Republican proposals, only 62 of which became law in the 2023-2024 term.

Conclusion

The 2023-2024 Michigan 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 Michigan.