



**Highlights from the 193rd General Court of the Commonwealth of
Massachusetts State 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 193rd Massachusetts General Court 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 most effective minority-party lawmaker in the Senate. Many listed legislators 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 the Massachusetts General Court is a much more egalitarian legislative body than legislatures in other states. In most other state legislatures, majority-party members and committee chairs tend to be more effective legislators by large margins. However, in Massachusetts, these roles make a much smaller difference in overall SLES.
- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one session are likely to remain effective lawmakers across multiple sessions, as several legislators appear on the lists of most effective lawmakers 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 193rd Massachusetts General Court House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.96 compared to 1.01 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 0.93. In the State Senate, those averages were 2.47 in the minority party, 0.88 in the majority party, and 0.97 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 Massachusetts General Court together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 193rd Massachusetts General Court House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Thomas Walsh (12th Essex)	7.21	None
2.	Sarah Peake (4th Barnstable)	4.10	None
3.	Natalie Blais (1st Franklin)	3.77	None
4.	Lindsay Sabadosa (1st Hampshire)	2.71	None
5.	James Arena-DeRosa (8th Middlesex)	2.46	None
6.	Andres Vargas (3rd Essex)	2.40	None
7.	Marjorie Decker (25th Middlesex)	2.38	None
8.	Meghan Kilcoyne (12th Worcester)	2.35	None
9.	John Barrett (1st Berkshire)	2.28	Chair
10.	Tackey Chan (2nd Norfolk)	2.12	None

At the top of the list is Representative Thomas Walsh (12th Essex) with a score of 7.21. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 44 bills, 32 received action beyond committee, 26 passed the House of Representatives, and 16 became law.

Rep. Walsh first served in the House, representing 12th Essex from 1987-1995. He reassumed office in 2016 during a special election. Rep. Walsh also served two terms on the Peabody City Council from 1984-1987 and from 2014-2016. Additionally, he was a member of the Peabody School Committee from 1998-2001. Rep. Walsh is a graduate of Salem State University (formerly Salem State College), and he has worked as an account manager.

Five legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring House Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Natalie Blais (1st Franklin), Rep. Sarah Peake (4th Barnstable), Rep. Marjorie Decker (25th Middlesex), Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne (12th Worcester), and Rep. Tackey Chan (2nd Norfolk).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 193rd Massachusetts General Court 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.	Bradley Jones (20th Middlesex)	4.44	15
2.	Marcus Vaughn (9th Norfolk)	2.47	1
3.	David DeCoste (5th Plymouth)	1.63	5
4.	Nicholas Boldyga (3rd Hampden)	1.37	7
5.	Steven Xiarhos (5th Barnstable)	1.32	2
6.	Steven Howitt (4th Bristol)	1.30	7
7.	Norman Orrall (12th Bristol)	1.15	3
8.	Paul Frost (7th Worcester)	1.12	14
9.	Hannah Kane (11th Worcester)	1.00	5
10.	David Vieira (3rd Barnstable)	0.99	7

Topping our list is Representative Bradley Jones of 20th Middlesex with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 4.44. He introduced 124 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 123 received action in committee, 21 received action beyond committee, 7 passed the House, and 6 became law.

Rep. Jones has been a member of the House of Representatives since 1995 and has been the House Minority Leader since 2003. He served on the North Reading Selectboard from 1993-1999 and the

North Reading Housing Authority from 1988-1992. In addition to the House, he currently serves on the North Reading Finance Committee and the North Reading Republican Town Committee. He is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University and the Harvard Extension School. He is a former member of the Board of Directors of Eastern Middlesex Services and is involved with the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Four legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring House Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Bradley Jones (20th Middlesex), Rep. Steven Howitt (4th Bristol), Rep. Hannah Kane (11th Worcester), and Rep. David Vieira (3rd Barnstable).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in 193rd Massachusetts General Court State Senate

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 State Senate. Three of the top ten most effective Democratic lawmakers in the Senate were committee chairs.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Julian Cyr (Cape and Islands)	2.90	None
2.	Barry Finegold (2nd Essex and Middlesex)	2.65	None
3.	Marc Pacheco (3rd Bristol and Plymouth)	1.90	Chair
4.	Brendan Crighton (3rd Essex)	1.77	Chair
5.	Paul Feeney (Bristol and Norfolk)	1.31	None
6.	John Velis (Hampden and Hampshire)	1.30	None
7.	Jacob Oliveira (Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester)	1.27	None
8.	John Keenan (Norfolk and Plymouth)	1.22	None
9.	Walter Timilty (Norfolk, Plymouth, and Bristol)	1.13	None
10.	Michael Rush (Norfolk and Suffolk)	1.10	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Sen. Julian Cyr from the Cape and Islands is first with an SLES score of 2.90. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 119 bills, 113 received action in committee, 59 received action beyond committee, 6 passed the Senate, and 4 became law.

Sen. Cyr joined the Senate in 2016 and is one of the youngest senators in the chamber. He is currently the Assistant Majority Whip. Before joining the Senate, Sen. Cyr was the director of policy and regulatory affairs for environmental health at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and he previously served as the department’s deputy director of government affairs. Sen. Cyr attended New York University and holds a degree in public policy and community health. Sen. Cyr interned at the White House during President Barack Obama’s tenure and worked for the Clinton Foundation’s Global Initiative on AIDS.

Four legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring Senate Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Julian Cyr (Cape and Islands), Sen. Barry Finegold (2nd Essex and Middlesex), Sen. Marc Pacheco (3rd Bristol and Plymouth), and Sen. Walter Timilty (Norfolk, Plymouth, and Bristol).

Most Effective Republican Lawmaker in the 193rd Massachusetts General Court State Senate (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Bruce Tarr (1st Essex and Middlesex)	2.57	15

Senator Bruce Tarr from 1st Essex and Middlesex had the highest SLES among Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 2.57. He introduced 136 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 135 of which received action in committee, 40 of which received action beyond committee, 5 of which passed the Senate, and 4 of which became law.

Sen. Tarr joined the Senate in 1995 and became the minority leader in 2011. Before joining the Senate, he represented the Massachusetts 5th Essex district in the State House from 1991-1995. He earned a degree in Business Administration and a J.D. from Suffolk University, and he holds an honorary degree in Applied Science from Essex Agricultural and Technical. Sen. Tarr is a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and is a Major in the Civil Air Patrol with the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary. Sen. Tarr is involved in several community organizations including the Northeast Seafood Coalition, the Gloucester Rotary Club, and the Northeast Coastal Coalition. Sen. Tarr has been named Legislator of the Year by multiple community organizations, including the Massachusetts Municipal Association, Cape Ann TV, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

Senator Tarr was also the most effective lawmaker among Senate Republicans during the 2021-2022 legislative session.

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.	Bradley Jones (R-20th Middlesex)	8 Legislative Sessions	4.44	15 Legislative Sessions
2.	Tackey Chan (D-2nd Norfolk)	6 Legislative Sessions	2.12	7 Legislative Sessions
3.	Josh Cutler (D-6th Plymouth)	5 Legislative Sessions	1.73	6 Legislative Sessions
4.	Marjorie Decker (D-25th Middlesex)	4 Legislative Sessions	2.38	6 Legislative Sessions
5.	Natalie Blais (D-1st Franklin)	3 Legislative Sessions	3.77	3 Legislative Sessions

Representative Bradley Jones (R) of 20th Middlesex had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 8 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 4.44 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Rep. Jones has consistently ranked as the most effective Republican lawmaker in the House since 2011.

State Senators 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.	Bruce Tarr (R-1st Essex and Middlesex)	8 Legislative Sessions	2.57	15 Legislative Sessions
2.	Patrick O’Connor (R-1st Plymouth and Norfolk)	4 Legislative Sessions	2.35	5 Legislative Sessions

Senator Bruce Tarr (R) of 1st Essex had the longest streak of being "Above Expectations" with 8 legislative sessions and an SLES score of 2.57 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Since 2009, Sen. Tarr has consistently ranked as the most effective Republican lawmaker in the Senate.

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. Freshman legislators’ 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.	Marcus Vaughn (R-9th Norfolk)	2.47
2.	James Arena-DeRosa (D-8th Middlesex)	2.46
3.	Kate Donaghue (D-19th Worcester)	1.92
4.	Christopher Worrell (D-5th Suffolk)	1.49
5.	Margaret Scarsdale (D-1st Middlesex)	1.36
6.	Aaron Saunders (D-7th Hampden)	1.30

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Republican Representative Marcus Vaughn (9th Norfolk) with a score of 2.47. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Vaughn introduced 49 bills, 44 of which received action in committee, 11 of which received action beyond committee, 6 of which passed the House, and 4 of which became law. He also ranked second among the most effective Republican lawmakers in the House.

Rep. Vaughn attended Syracuse University on a full athletic scholarship. He later received an M.B.A from California State University – Monterey Bay. Rep. Vaughn lives in Wrentham with his family and owns a business. He has previous high-level business management experience across multiple companies.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, our data show that the Massachusetts General Court is a rather egalitarian legislative body. Whereas most state legislatures across the country are organized such

that majority-party members and especially majority-party committee chairs are the most effective, such differences play a small role in Massachusetts. For example, in the 2023-24 term, committee chairs in the House averaged an SLES of 0.93, less than the overall average across all members. In the Senate, committee chairs over the entire period of our data from 2009-2024 averaged only 1.06. In contrast, committee chairs average a value of 1.53 nationwide, showing them to be more than 50% more active and effective than rank-and-file lawmakers.

Egalitarianism also plays out across the parties in Massachusetts. Perhaps due to the small numbers of Republicans in the General Court, their successes may not be seen as threatening to majority-party Democrats. Whereas minority-party members across the country average an SLES of around 0.6, that average in Massachusetts across recent decades has been 0.9, almost on par with majority-party members.

Conclusion

The 193rd Massachusetts General Court legislative session demonstrated consistent patterns in legislative effectiveness, with experienced legislators and majority-party members continuing to hold an 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 Massachusetts.