



**Highlights from the 2023-2024 North Carolina General Assembly 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 2023-2024 North Carolina 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 the majority party and minority party in the North Carolina House of Representatives and Senate. Many 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, consistent with our published research findings, there is an overall lawmaking benefit from being in the majority party. Across the 2023–2024 legislative term, majority-party Republicans consistently outperformed minority-party Democrats in State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and bill outcomes. Despite Democrats holding more than one-third of the seats in each chamber and controlling the governorship, only 4 of the 205 laws produced during the 2023-2024 session were sponsored by Democrats. This results in a law ratio of 50:1 between Republicans and Democrats, highlighting the substantial advantage held by majority-party lawmakers in the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 2023-2024 North Carolina General Assembly legislative session, where 9 of the top 10 most effective legislators in the majority party in both chambers held committee chair positions.
- 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 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 2023-2024 North Carolina House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.32 compared to 1.44 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.54. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.25 in the minority party, 1.48 in the majority party, and 1.69 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 North Carolina General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

### Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 North Carolina House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives. Nine 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.	<b>Robert “Ted” Davis (District 20)</b>	4.59	Chair
2.	<b>Destin Hall (District 87)</b>	3.72	Chair
3.	<b>Carson Smith (District 16)</b>	3.63	Chair
4.	<b>Hugh Blackwell (District 86)</b>	3.49	Chair
5.	<b>Matthew Winslow (District 7)</b>	3.46	Chair
6.	<b>John Torbett (District 108)</b>	3.46	Chair
7.	<b>Erin Paré (District 37)</b>	3.37	Chair

<b>8.</b>	<b>Jon Hardister (District 59)</b>	2.69	None
<b>9.</b>	<b>Donny Lambeth (District 75)</b>	2.68	Chair
<b>10.</b>	<b>John R. Bradford (District 98)</b>	2.65	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Robert “Ted” Davis from District 20 (New Hanover County) with a score of 4.59. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 22 bills, 15 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 11 of which passed the House, and 4 of which became law.

Rep. Davis assumed office in 2012. Before joining the House, he served on the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners for 16 years and was elected Chairman of the Board five times. Rep. Davis graduated from the University of North Carolina with a degree in political science and holds a J.D. from Wake Forest University. During his legal career, he served as the Assistant New Hanover County Attorney, Assistant State District Attorney, and Assistant United States Attorney. In 1984, he established his own law practice and retired in July 2016. In the community, he serves on the Airlie Gardens Foundation Board of Directors and on the Cape Fear Community College Board of Trustees.

Four Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top 10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Destin Hall (District 87), Rep. Carson Smith (District 16), Rep. Hugh Blackwell (District 86), and Jon Hardister (District 59).

### **Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 North Carolina House of Representatives**

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

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

	<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>LES</b></u>	<u><b>Seniority</b></u>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Michael Wray (District 27)</b>	1.35	10
<b>2.</b>	<b>Kelly M. Alexander (District 107)</b>	0.80	8
<b>3.</b>	<b>Robert Reives (District 54)</b>	0.74	5
<b>4.</b>	<b>Sarah Crawford (District 66)</b>	0.69	1
<b>5.</b>	<b>Julie Von Haefen (District 36)</b>	0.62	3
<b>6.</b>	<b>Vernetta Alston (District 29)</b>	0.61	3
<b>7.</b>	<b>Joe John (District 40)</b>	0.54	4
<b>8.</b>	<b>Mary “Pricey” Harrison (District 61)</b>	0.53	10
<b>9.</b>	<b>Cynthia Ball (District 49)</b>	0.53	4

<b>10.</b>	<b>Terry Brown (District 92)</b>	0.48	2
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Topping our list is Representative Michael Wray of District 27 (Halifax, Northampton, and Warren counties) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.35. He introduced 7 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session: 6 received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the House, and 1 became law.

Rep. Wray joined the House in 2005 and left office in 2025. While in the House, he served as the Deputy Minority Whip and was a founding member of North Carolina’s Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus. Before joining the House, Rep. Wray was a Gaston County Commissioner. He holds a B.A. from Barton College and has experience as a small business owner in Gaston, North Carolina.

Three Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top 10 highest-scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Julie Von Haefen (District 36), Rep. Joe John (District 40), and Rep. Mary “Pricey” Harrison (District 61).

### **Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 North Carolina 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><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>LES</b></u>	<u><b>Committee Chair</b></u>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Ralph Hise (District 47)</b>	3.81	Chair
<b>2.</b>	<b>Amy Galey (District 25)</b>	3.77	Chair
<b>3.</b>	<b>Todd Johnson (District 35)</b>	3.55	Chair
<b>4.</b>	<b>Joyce Krawiec (District 31)</b>	3.49	Chair
<b>5.</b>	<b>Warren Daniel (District 46)</b>	3.32	Chair
<b>6.</b>	<b>Timothy D. Moffitt (District 48)</b>	3.31	None
<b>7.</b>	<b>Danny Britt (District 24)</b>	3.13	Chair
<b>8.</b>	<b>Bill Rabon (District 8)</b>	2.37	Chair
<b>9.</b>	<b>Vickie Sawyer (District 37)</b>	1.83	Chair
<b>10.</b>	<b>Tom McInnis (District 21)</b>	1.80	Chair

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator Ralph Hise of District 47 (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Haywood, Madison, Mitchell, Watauga, and Yancey counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 3.81. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 33 bills, 13 of which received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 11 of which became law.

Sen. Hise assumed office in 2011 and was elected Deputy President Pro Tempore of the Senate in 2019. Sen. Hise earned a B.S. in statistics from Appalachian State University and a M.Ed. in higher education administration from North Carolina State University. He works as a statistician and an expert-in-residence in the Health Policy Institute at the University of North Carolina, Asheville.

Six legislators on the list were among the top ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Ralph Hise (District 47), Sen. Todd Johnson (District 35), Sen. Joyce Krawiec (District 31), Sen. Warren Daniel (District 46), Sen. Danny Britt (District 24), and Sen. Vickie Sawyer (District 37).

## Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 North Carolina State Senate

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

The following table identifies the ten highest scoring minority-party Democrats in the 2023-2024 State Senate.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	<b>Sydney Batch (District 17)</b>	0.57	2
2.	<b>Kandie Smith (District 5)</b>	0.49	1
3.	<b>Mike Woodard (District 22)</b>	0.44	6
4.	<b>Julie Mayfield (District 49)</b>	0.44	2
5.	<b>Natasha Marcus (District 41)</b>	0.38	3
6.	<b>Gale Adcock (District 16)</b>	0.35	1
7.	<b>Natalie Murdock (District 20)</b>	0.33	3
8.	<b>Lisa Grafstein (District 13)</b>	0.29	1
9.	<b>DeAndrea Salvador (District 39)</b>	0.22	2
10.	<b>Joyce Waddell (District 40)</b>	0.22	5

Senator Sydney Batch (Wake County) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 0.57. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 51 bills.

Sen. Batch assumed office in 2021. She currently serves as the Minority Leader of the Senate and the leader of the Senate Democratic Caucus and is the first woman and first Black woman to hold that role. Before joining the Senate, she represented District 37 in the North Carolina State House. Sen. Batch holds a B.A., M.S.W, and a J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has practiced law since 2005, specializing in divorce, child custody, and child welfare.

Four legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Mike Woodard (District 22), Sen. Natasha Marcus (District 41), Sen. Natalie Murdock (District 20), and Sen. DeAndrea Salvador (District 39).

### 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 Representatives and Senators 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.	<b>Sarah Stevens (R-90)</b>	7 Legislative Sessions	2.58	8 Legislative Sessions
2.	<b>Hugh Blackwell (R-86)</b>	3 Legislative Sessions	3.49	8 Legislative Sessions
3.	<b>Jon Hardister (R-59)</b>	3 Legislative Sessions	2.69	6 Legislative Sessions

Representative Sarah Stevens (R) of District 90 (Surry and Wilkes County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 7 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 2.58 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 14 bills; 11 received action in committee and action beyond committee; 6 passed the House; and 2 became law.

Rep. Stevens assumed office in 2009 and served as the Speaker Pro Tempore of the House from 2017-2025. She is currently running for the North Carolina Supreme Court. Rep. Stevens holds a B.S. from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro and a J.D. from Campbell University School of Law. She has operated a private practice and has been president of the Surry County Bar Association for over 30 years.

#### 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.	<b>Danny Britt (R-24)</b>	4 Legislative Sessions	3.13	4 Legislative Sessions

The only State Senator with a streak of “Above Expectations” is Senator Danny Britt (R) of District 24 (Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties) with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES of 3.13 in the

2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 24 bills, 13 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the Senate, and 6 of which became law. Sen. Britt has consistently ranked among the top- 10 most effective Republican Senators since 2017.

Sen. Britt assumed office in 2017. He is a Lt. Colonel in the North Carolina Army National Guard. Sen. Britt holds a bachelor’s degree from Appalachian State University and a J.D. from Oklahoma City University School of Law. He has experience working in private practice and as a Superior Court Assistant District Attorney for the Robeson County district attorney's office. He currently has his own law practice. In the community, he has gained statewide recognition as a disaster recovery leader and volunteer and serves as a member of the American Flood Coalition.

### **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. Freshmen 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)**

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>SLES (2023-2024)</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Kevin Crutchfield (R-83)</b>	2.18
<b>2.</b>	<b>Sarah Crawford (D-66)</b>	0.69
<b>3.</b>	<b>Zack Hawkins (D-31)</b>	0.40
<b>4.</b>	<b>Laura Budd (D-103)</b>	0.38
<b>5.</b>	<b>Ray Jeffers (D-2)</b>	0.37
<b>6.</b>	<b>Lindsey Prather (D-115)</b>	0.35

The State Representative with the highest SLES who was also "Above Expectations" during his freshman term was Republican Representative Kevin Crutchfield of District 83 (Cabarrus and

Rowan counties) with a score of 2.18. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Crutchfield introduced 10 bills, 8 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 6 of which passed the House, and 2 of which became law.

Rep. Crutchfield was elected as the Freshman Majority Leader during his first term in office and founded the House Small Business Caucus. He attended the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and worked for 15 years at IBM. In 1998, Rep. Crutchfield and his wife founded Casco Signs, which has become the region's premier sign company and operates across the nation. In the community, Rep. Crutchfield has served on the Cabarrus County Planning and Zoning Board, the Rowan Cabarrus Community College Foundation Board, and the Hospitality and Tourism Authority of Charlotte Board.

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

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>SLES (2023-2024)</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Timothy D. Moffitt (R-48)</b>	3.31
<b>2.</b>	<b>Benton Sawrey (R-10)</b>	1.34
<b>3.</b>	<b>Kandie Smith (D-5)</b>	0.49
<b>4.</b>	<b>Gale Adcock (D-16)</b>	0.35
<b>5.</b>	<b>Lisa Grafstein (D-13)</b>	0.29

Sen. Timothy “Tim” Moffitt (Henderson, Polk, and Rutherford counties) was the highest-performing State Senator ranked “Above Expectations” during his freshman term with a score of 3.31. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Sen Moffitt introduced 52 bills, 11 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the Senate, and 8 of which became law. Sen. Moffitt (as noted above) was the 6<sup>th</sup> highest-scoring Republican Senator during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Before joining the Senate, Sen. Moffitt represented North Carolina’s 117th District in the State House from 2011-2015 and from 2020-2023. His family has resided in the mountains of Western North Carolina for over 250 years. He is an entrepreneur and manages operations for several small businesses, including a real estate firm; a mountaintop vacation and events venue; and Moffitt International, an executive search and management consulting firm.

## **Other Findings**

In terms of broader patterns, although there is a majority-party advantage in most states, this advantage is strongly revealed in the North Carolina General Assembly. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the average scores for minority-party Democrats in North Carolina are about half of that for 2023-24, sitting at 0.32 in the House of Representatives and 0.25 in the Senate.

These differences translate into a wide gap in the number of laws produced by Democrats relative to Republicans. Of the 205 laws produced in the 2023-2024 term, only 4 of them were sponsored by Democrats. Given that Democrats held more than a third of the seats in each chamber, as well as controlling the governorship, this 50:1 ratio in laws coming from Republicans to those coming from Democrats is significantly out of proportion with the relative seat-shares, and well beyond what is seen in most states across the country.

## **Conclusion**

The 2023-2024 North Carolina 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 North Carolina.