



**Highlights from the 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado 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 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado General Assembly. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective majority party lawmakers and the top-5 most effective minority party lawmakers in both chambers, including many legislators who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous legislative sessions.
- We identify the lawmaker with the longest streak 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. During the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, majority-party Democratic lawmakers had significantly higher bill passage rates than minority-party Republicans. Though Republicans were not entirely shut out of the lawmaking process, only 139 of the 1,002 laws passed during the 2023-2024 legislative sessions were sponsored by Republicans. This difference highlights the clear advantage majority-party lawmakers hold in the Colorado General Assembly.
- Across both chambers, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. Four out of the top-10 most effective majority party lawmakers in both chambers were committee chairs during the 74th Colorado General Assembly.
- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one legislative session are likely to remain effective lawmakers in other sessions, as several legislators appear among the top-10 or top-5 most effective lawmakers list 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. While the scores capture how successful an individual member of the Colorado House or Senate is at advancing her sponsored bills, compared to all members of her chamber (in a legislative term), it's important to be cognizant of the fact that the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores do not capture lawmaking activities that occur behind the scenes, such as legislators advocating for the passage of bills that they haven't sponsored. The scores also don't capture how effective individual members of the House or Senate are at blocking the advancement of other legislators' sponsored bills. To the extent that we are interested in identifying who is most successful at advancing their sponsored legislation through the different stages of the lawmaking process (and why), however, the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores provide us with an objective indicator of legislators' efforts. 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 Colorado House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.52 compared to 1.18 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.35. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.55 in the minority party, 1.22 in the majority party, and 1.27 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 Colorado General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

### **Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado House of Representatives**

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Shannon Bird (District 29)</b>	8.70	None
<b>2.</b>	<b>Emily Sirota (District 9)</b>	2.14	Chair
<b>3.</b>	<b>Kyle Brown (District 12)</b>	1.96	None
<b>4.</b>	<b>Meghan Lukens (District 26)</b>	1.84	None
<b>5.</b>	<b>Michael Weissman (District 35)</b>	1.80	Chair
<b>6.</b>	<b>Judith Amabile (District 49)</b>	1.70	Chair
<b>7.</b>	<b>Monica Duran (District 23)</b>	1.66	None
<b>8.</b>	<b>Julie McCluskie (District 13)</b>	1.65	None
<b>9.</b>	<b>William Lindstedt (District 33)</b>	1.63	None
<b>10.</b>	<b>Marc Snyder (District 18)</b>	1.49	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Shannon Bird from District 29 (Adams and Jefferson counties) with a score of 8.70. In the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, she was the first prime sponsor for 95 bills, 92 of which received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 91 became law.

Rep. Bird has served in the Colorado House of Representatives since 2019 and is a former Westminster City Councilwoman. She holds a B.A. in economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder, an M.S. and M.B.A from the University of Colorado at Denver, and a J.D. from the University of Denver. Formerly, she was employed in the private sector, practicing law in public and commercial finance with a focus on large-scale community infrastructure projects.

In the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, Rep. Bird was the Chair of the Joint Budget Committee, and in this capacity, she (along with Rep. Emily Sirota, another member of the committee) was not bound by the five-bill-per-year introduction limit that constrains most members of the Colorado legislature, as dictated by the Colorado legislature’s joint rules. While the five-bill-per-session limit is sometimes waived, especially for members of the majority party, members of the Joint Budget Committee generally introduce (and successfully advance) notably more bills than other legislators in their chambers. In 2025, Rep. Bird announced her bid to run for Colorado's 8th Congressional District against incumbent Rep. Gabe Evans (R), and she resigned from her position in the State House in early 2026 to focus on her campaign for Congress.

Two Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative sessions: Rep. Shannon Bird (District 29), Rep. Julie McCluskie (District 13).

## Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado House of Representatives

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

### Top Five List—House Republicans (2023-2024 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	<b>Matt Soper (District 54)</b>	1.17	3
2.	<b>Rick Taggart (District 55)</b>	1.00	1
3.	<b>Ryan Armagost (District 64)</b>	0.80	1
4.	<b>Rose Pugliese (District 14)</b>	0.57	1
5.	<b>Mary Bradfield (District 21)</b>	0.56	2

Topping our list is Representative Matt Soper of District 54 (Mesa and Delta counties) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.17. He was the first prime sponsor for 16 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, 11 of which received action beyond committee, passed the House of Representatives, and became law.

Rep. Soper joined the Colorado House in 2019. Before joining the House, he was a member of the Orchard City Town Council and on the Seventh Judicial Nominating Commission. Rep. Soper holds an undergraduate degree from Colorado Mesa University, an LLM and LLB from the University of Edinburgh School of Law, and a J.D. University of New Hampshire's Franklin Pierce School of Law. In the community, he has been affiliated with numerous organizations, including the Delta County Memorial Hospital District Board of Directors, the Colorado Tourism Office Board of Directors, and the Colorado Mesa University Board of Trustees. In 2026, Rep. Soper announced his candidacy for Delta County Commissioner.

Rep. Soper was the only Republican Representative on our current list to rank among the top 5 highest-scorers in both the 2023-2024 and 2021-2022 legislative sessions.

## Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado State Senate

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	<b>Rachel Zenzinger (District 19)</b>	4.72	None
2.	<b>Dylan Roberts (District 8)</b>	2.24	Chair
3.	<b>Jeff Bridges (District 26)</b>	2.12	Chair
4.	<b>Faith Winter (District 25)</b>	1.84	Chair

<b>5.</b>	<b>Steve Fenberg (District 18)</b>	1.79	None
<b>6.</b>	<b>Rhonda Fields (District 28)</b>	1.44	Chair
<b>7.</b>	<b>Robert Rodriguez (District 32)</b>	1.35	None
<b>8.</b>	<b>Nick Hinrichsen (District 3)</b>	1.21	None
<b>9.</b>	<b>Lisa Cutter (District 20)</b>	1.13	None
<b>10.</b>	<b>Jessie Danielson (District 22)</b>	1.10	Chair

Among Democrats in the Senate, Senator Rachel Zenzinger from District 19 (Adams and Jefferson counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 4.72. In the 2023-2024 sessions, she was the first prime sponsor for 67 bills, all of which received action beyond committee, and passed the Senate, and 66 of which became law.

Sen. Zenzinger first joined the Colorado Senate in 2013 and served until 2015. She then rejoined the Senate in 2017 and served until 2025. In the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, Senator Zenzinger was the Chair of the Joint Budget Committee, and (similar to Rep. Bird and Rep. Sirota in the House, and Sen. Jeff Bridges, another member of the Joint Budget Committee) she was not constrained by the five-bill-per-year introduction limit that other members of the Senate had to navigate.

Before joining the Senate, she served on the Arvada City Council and was Mayor Pro Tem in 2011. She holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in adult learning from Regis University, and she has worked as an educator with extensive experience in school finance. In the community, she has served as a board member of the Arvada Center, Ralston House, and Denver Regional Council of Governments. Today, Sen. Zenzinger serves on the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners.

Six legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative sessions: Sen. Rachel Zenzinger (District 19), Sen. Jeff Bridges (District 26), Sen. Faith Winter (District 25), Sen. Steve Fenberg (District 18), Sen. Rhonda Fields (District 28), and Sen. Jessie Danielson (District 22).

## Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado State Senate

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

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

	<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>LES</b></u>	<u><b>Seniority</b></u>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Byron Pelton (District 1)</b>	0.82	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>Bob Gardner (District 12)</b>	0.81	4
<b>3.</b>	<b>Cleave Simpson (District 6)</b>	0.80	2

<b>4.</b>	<b>Kevin Van Winkle (District 30)</b>	0.75	1
<b>5.</b>	<b>Mark Baisley (District 4)</b>	0.52	1

Senator Byron Pelton from District 1 (Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, and Yuma counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, with a score of 0.82. He was the first prime sponsor for 14 bills, 10 of which received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 9 of which became law. Today, Sen. Pelton serves as the Minority Caucus Chair.

Before joining the State Senate, Sen. Pelton served on the Logan County Commission for six years and was involved in local Republican Party leadership. Sen. Pelton is a United States Navy Veteran and served as a Master Electrician repairing damaged ships during Desert Storm. After his service in the Navy, he returned to Colorado and now runs a small cow-calf operation called Flying H. Cattle Company. Sen. Pelton has been recognized for his leadership through various legislative awards from organizations including the Colorado Chamber of Commerce, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the Colorado Community College System.

Senator Bob Gardner (District 12) was the only Republican Senator to appear among the top 5 highest-scoring Republican Senators in both the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative sessions.

### **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. Below we identify the Representative with the longest active streak of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2023-2024 legislative sessions.

### **State Representative with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations” (through the 2023-2024 Legislative Sessions)**

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Streak</u></b>	<b><u>SLES (2023-2024)</u></b>	<b><u>Seniority</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Matt Soper (R-54)</b>	3 Legislative Sessions	1.17	3 Legislative Sessions

Rep. Matt Soper (R) of District 54 (Mesa and Delta counties) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 3 legislative sessions, and a SLES score of 1.17 in the 2023-2024 legislative sessions. Rep. Soper (as noted above) was the highest-scoring Republican lawmaker in the House in the 2023-2024 legislative sessions. In addition, Rep. Soper has ranked among the top 5 highest-scoring Republican Representatives since joining the House in 2019.

## 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 Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	<b>Kyle Brown (D-12)</b>	1.96
2.	<b>Meghan Lukens (D-26)</b>	1.84
3.	<b>William Lindstedt (D-33)</b>	1.63
4.	<b>Rick Taggart (R-55)</b>	1.00
5.	<b>Ryan Armagost (R-64)</b>	0.80

The State Representative with the highest SLES score, and who was "Above Expectations" during his freshman term was Representative Kyle Brown (Boulder and Broomfield counties) with a score of 1.96. Rep. Brown was the first prime sponsor for 19 bills during the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, 18 of which received action beyond committee, passed the House, and became law.

Before joining the Colorado House, Rep. Brown served as a City Council Member for the City of Louisville from 2020-2023. While on the City Council, he served as the Deputy Commissioner for Affordability Programs at the Colorado Division of Insurance, where he helped design and implement Colorado Option, which improved access to and reduced costs of care statewide. Rep. Brown holds a bachelor’s degree in biology from Georgetown University and a Ph.D in genetics from Harvard University. During his career, he has advised multiple U.S. Senators and Colorado governors on health care, education, and economic security.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	<b>Dylan Roberts (D-8)</b>	2.24
2.	<b>Byron Pelton (R-1)</b>	0.82
3.	<b>Kevin Van Winkle (R-30)</b>	0.75

Senator Dylan Roberts (D) of District 8 (Clear Creek, Eagle, Garfield, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit counties) was the freshman Senator with the highest SLES score, and who was "Above Expectations" for the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, with a SLES of 2.24. In addition, Sen. Roberts was the second-most effective Democratic lawmaker in the Senate in the 2023-2024 legislative sessions.

Sen. Roberts was the first prime sponsor for 28 bills during the 2023-2024 legislative sessions, 27 of which received action beyond committee, 26 passed the Senate, and 25 became law. Sen. Roberts currently serves as the Majority Caucus Chair of the Colorado Senate.

Before joining the Senate, Sen. Roberts represented Colorado's 65th district in the Colorado House of Representatives from 2017 to 2023. He holds a J.D. from the University of Colorado, and he previously served as the Deputy District Attorney for Eagle County, Colorado. In 2008, Sen. Roberts served as a community organizer in Northwest Colorado for President Barack Obama's campaign and he later worked on President Obama's reelection campaign and Congressman Ed Perlmutter's campaign.

### Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, the Colorado General Assembly continues to see lawmaking advantages of majority-party members over those in the minority party. With large Democratic majorities, proposals from Republicans are naturally more difficult to advance. Across all states, the average SLES of minority-party members is 0.6. In Colorado, the averages among minority-party Republicans are somewhat lower still, at 0.55 in the Senate and 0.52 in the House.

This does not mean that Republicans were completely shut out of the lawmaking process, however. In the 2023-24 term, the average Republican in the House sponsored about 3.6 bills that became law, relative to 10.2 laws produced on average by Democratic sponsors. In the Senate, those rates were about 5.9 laws from the average Republican and 14.8 among Democrats. Collectively, the combination of the larger number of Democrats and higher numbers of laws per Democrat than for Republicans meant that only 139 of the 1,002 laws produced in Colorado in 2023-24 were sponsored by Republicans.

## **Conclusion**

The 74<sup>th</sup> Colorado General Assembly demonstrated consistent patterns in legislative effectiveness, with experienced legislators, committee chairs, 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 Colorado.