



Highlights from the 2024-2025 Virginia General Assembly State Legislative Effectiveness Scores

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6/24/2026

Executive Summary

The Center for Effective Lawmaking (CEL) is pleased to announce the release of the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) for the 2024-2025 Virginia General Assembly. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective lawmakers in the majority and minority parties in both chambers. 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 a first-term lawmaker in this category. Our analysis shows that first-term lawmakers in the Virginia General Assembly perform well above the national SLES average for first-term lawmakers.
- We find that, consistent with our published research findings, there is an overall lawmaking benefit from being in the majority-party. Across the 2024–2025 legislative term, majority-party Democrats consistently outperformed minority-party Republicans in State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and bill outcomes. However, despite recent partisan battles over redistricting, there is a much greater balance of lawmaking effectiveness than what is found across the country. While majority-party Democratic lawmakers still introduced the majority of successful legislation across both chambers, producing 650 laws in the House of Delegates and 365 laws in the Senate, minority-party Republicans still performed well with their sponsored bills, producing 271 laws in the House of Delegates and 235 laws in the Senate. This comparison highlights the more egalitarian dynamic present within the Virginia General Assembly than across the nation as a whole.

- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, where many of the most effective lawmakers across the majority-party held committee chair positions.
- In some states, Virginia included, party leaders serve a greater role behind the scenes, rather than in advancing legislation they sponsor directly. For example, as Speakers of the General Assembly, neither Don Scott (D) in 2024-25 nor Todd Gilbert (R) in 2022-23 introduced any bills directly themselves, but instead exerted significant legislative influence through other means. Our approach does not measure such influence of leaders, who might be better evaluated in other ways.
- That said, 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 2024-2025 and 2022-2023 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 Delegates and the State Senate in each legislative session. While the scores capture how successful an individual member of the Virginia House of Delegates 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 of Delegates 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 on our website.

For each member of the House of Delegates 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 2024-2025 Virginia House of Delegates, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.65 compared to 1.33 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.50. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.76 in the minority party, 1.23 in the majority-party, and 1.41 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 Virginia General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2024-2025 Virginia House of Delegates

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2024-2025 Virginia House of Delegates. Four of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—House Democrats (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Patrick Hope (District 1)	2.68	Chair
2.	Richard Sullivan (District 6)	2.16	None
3.	Marcia Price (District 85)	2.04	Chair
4.	Betsy Carr (District 78)	1.96	None
5.	Rodney Willett (District 58)	1.94	None
6.	Irene Shin (District 8)	1.88	None
7.	Sam Rasoul (District 38)	1.79	Chair
8.	Marcus Simon (District 13)	1.75	Chair
9.	Kathy Tran (District 18)	1.75	None
10.	Shelly Simonds (District 70)	1.71	None

At the top of the list is Delegate Patrick Hope from District 1 (Arlington County) with a score of 2.68. In the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, he introduced 56 bills, 55 received action in committee, 45 received action beyond committee, 40 passed the House of Delegates, and 31 became law.

Del. Hope assumed office in 2010. Del. Hope holds a B.A. in history from St. Mary’s University, an M.A. in congressional studies from The Catholic University, and a J.D. from the Catholic University Columbus School of Law. During his early career, he worked on Capitol Hill for Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska and Representative Henry B. Gonzalez of Texas. He currently works in the medical technology industry, and he is an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins and at Marymount University. Before joining the General Assembly, Del. Hope was the President of the Buckingham Community Civic Association and chair of the Arlington County Community

Services Board. In the community, he belongs to the Arlington County Bar Association, the Arlington Kiwanis Club, and the Arlington Historical Society.

Five Democratic Delegates on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Del. Patrick Hope (District 1), Del. Richard Sullivan (District 6), Del. Betsy Carr (District 78), Del. Sam Rasoul (District 38), and Del. Kathy Tran (District 18).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2024-2025 Virginia House of Delegates

The following table identifies the top ten highest scorers in the 2024-2025 Virginia House of Delegates among minority-party Republicans.

Top Ten List—House Republicans (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Keith Hodges (District 68)	1.27	7
2.	Carrie Coyner (District 75)	1.17	3
3.	Michael Webert (District 61)	1.15	7
4.	Wendell Walker (District 52)	1.08	3
5.	Tony Wilt (District 34)	1.07	8
6.	Wren Williams (District 47)	1.06	2
7.	Jonathan Arnold (District 46)	1.03	1
8.	Terry Austin (District 37)	1.01	6
9.	Chris Runion (District 35)	0.99	3
10.	Mike Cherry (District 74)	0.98	2

Topping our list is Delegate Keith Hodges, District 68 (Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, and Middlesex counties), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.27. He introduced 29 bills in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, 28 received action in committee, 17 received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 16 became law.

Del. Hodges assumed office in 2012. Del. Hodges completed his education at the University of Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Medical College of Virginia. He owns Gloucester Pharmacy, and he works as a pharmacist. While in the Virginia House of Delegates, he helped organize the region’s first economic development summit, the Rural Coastal Summit, which has helped boost economic opportunities in the Middle Peninsula. In the community, Del. Hodges serves on the Riverside Walter Reed Hospital Board and the BB&T Local Advisory Board, and he is a member of the local Chambers of Commerce.

Three Republican Delegates on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Del. Keith Hodges (District 68), Del. Carrie Coyner (District 75), and Del. Michael Webert (District 61).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2024-2025 Virginia State Senate

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2024-2025 Virginia State Senate. Seven of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—Senate Democrats (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Barbara Favola (District 40)	2.05	Chair
2.	Adam Ebbin (District 39)	1.78	Chair
3.	Scott Surovell (District 34)	1.54	Chair
4.	Creigh Deeds (District 11)	1.51	Chair
5.	Mamie Locke (District 23)	1.46	Chair
6.	Jeremy McPike (District 29)	1.41	Chair
7.	Ghazala Hashmi (District 15)	1.37	Chair
8.	Russet Perry (District 31)	1.35	None
9.	Lamont Bagby (District 14)	1.27	None
10.	Lashrecse Aird (District 13)	1.24	None

Among Democrats in the Senate, Senator Barbara Favola of District 40 (Arlington County) ranked first with a SLES score of 2.05. In the 2024-2025 sessions, she introduced 56 bills, 55 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 51 of which passed the Senate, and 32 of which became law.

Sen. Favola was first elected to the Senate in 2011 and she currently serves as a Democratic Whip. Before serving in the Senate, Sen. Favola was a member of the Arlington County Board for 14 years, where she served as chairwoman for three terms, and she led the Chesapeake Bay Committee on the Council of Governments. During her early career, she worked as a Senior Advisor in the Department of Health and Human Services and as a congressional staffer on the House Budget Committee. She graduated from Saint Joseph’s College, and she holds an M.P.A. from New York University. She currently chairs the Women’s Healthcare Caucus, and she was the 2025 recipient of the William L. Winston Award by the Arlington County Bar Foundation for her dedication to public service.

Four legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring Democratic Senators in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Sen. Barbara Favola (District 40), Sen. Scott Surovell (District 34), Sen. Creigh Deeds (District 11), and Sen. Jeremy McPike (District 29).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2024-2025 Virginia Senate

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scoring lawmakers in the 2024-2025 Virginia Senate among minority-party Republicans.

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Mark Obenshain (District 2)	1.10	11
2.	Bryce Reeves (District 28)	1.09	7
3.	William Stanley (District 7)	1.07	8
4.	Chris Head (District 3)	1.02	1
5.	Richard Stuart (District 25)	1.01	9
6.	Todd Pillion (District 6)	0.96	3
7.	David Suetterlein (District 4)	0.93	5
8.	Tara Durant (District 27)	0.92	1
9.	Christie New Craig (District 19)	0.89	1
10.	Bill DeSteph (District 20)	0.89	5

Senator Mark Obenshain of District 2 (Bath, Highland, Page, Rockingham, and Augusta counties) had the highest SLES among Senate Republicans in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, with a score of 1.10. During the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, he introduced 36 bills, 31 received action in committee, 26 received action beyond committee, 24 passed the Senate, and 18 became law.

Sen. Obenshain assumed office in 2004 and has served as the Senate Republican Caucus Chairman since 2023. He holds a B.A. in education from Virginia Tech and a J.D. from the Washington and Lee School of Law. Sen. Obenshain founded Obenshain Law Group, and he has worked as a trial lawyer for more than 35 years. In the community, he has served on the Board of Visitors at James Madison University, the board of the Harrisonburg Education Foundation, and the Shenandoah Valley Technology Council. In addition, Sen. Obenshain has been deeply involved with the Republican Party, serving as a delegate at every state Republican convention since 1980, as a member of Virginia's delegation to the 1980 Republican National Convention, and on the campaigns of many local and statewide Republican candidates.

Six legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring Republican Senators in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Sen. Mark Obenshain (District 2), Sen. Bryce Reeves (District 28), Sen. William Stanley (District 7), Sen. Richard Stuart (District 25), Sen. Todd Pillion (District 6), and Sen. David Suetterlein (District 4).

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. We identify the Delegates with the longest active streak of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2024-2025 legislative sessions below.

State Delegates with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations” (through the 2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>SLES (2024-2025)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Patrick Hope (D-1)	7 Legislative Sessions	2.68	8 Legislative Sessions
2.	Carrie Coyner (R-75)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.17	3 Legislative Sessions

Delegate Patrick Hope (D) of District 1 (Arlington County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 7 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 2.68 in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions. Del. Hope (as noted above) was the highest-scoring Democratic lawmaker in the House of Delegates in the 2024-2025 sessions. In addition, Del. Hope has held the top spot as the most effective Democratic lawmaker in the House since the 2016-2017 legislative sessions.

High-Performing Freshmen

One way to identify future legislative leaders is to identify freshmen Delegates 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 Delegate “Above Expectations” (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2024-2025)</u>
1.	Jonathan Arnold (R-46)	1.03

Delegate Jonathan Arnold (Grayson, Pulaski, Smyth, and Wythe counties) was the Delegate who had the highest SLES and who was also “Above Expectations” in lawmaking effectiveness during his freshman term, with a score of 1.03. During the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, Del. Arnold introduced 29 bills; 21 of which received action in committee, and 14 received action beyond committee, passed the House of Delegates, and became law.

Delegate Arnold won a special election in 2023 to the Virginia House of Delegates and he was subsequently reelected that same year. In 2025, Del. Arnold announced he would not seek reelection, and he left office in 2026. Del. Arnold holds a B.S. in philosophy and religious studies from Radford University, and a J.D. from the Appalachian School of Law. He currently works as an attorney.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, interesting findings emerged both with respect to legislative seniority and regarding party influence. Due to redistricting and a large wave of retirements, the 2023 elections brought historic levels of turnover to both the House of Delegates and the Senate, with nearly a third of the Delegates and half of the Senators serving their freshmen terms in 2024-2025. Our analysis shows that those new legislators hit the ground running with remarkable success. Across the country, the average first-term lawmaker earned a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 0.66. But in the Virginia General Assembly in 2024-2025, these newly elected members averaged 0.84 in the House and 0.83 in the Senate, coupling their new ideas with lawmaking success.

In terms of party influence, the recent partisan battles over redistricting and other matters often yield the impression of significant partisan divides across the Commonwealth. In contrast, our data show that the Virginia General Assembly achieves a greater balance in lawmaking effectiveness across parties than is found in most states across the country. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.60, the average scores in 2024-2025 for minority-party Republicans in the Virginia House of Delegates were somewhat higher at 0.65 and in the Senate at an average value of 0.76.

Such egalitarianism translates reasonably well into the number of laws produced by the parties. Near parity was achieved in the Senate, where 365 laws resulted from the bills sponsored by majority-party Democratic Senators in 2024-2025, compared to 235 laws from the bills sponsored

by Republican Senators. A bit more of an imbalance occurred in the House with 271 laws from the bills of Republicans compared to 650 from majority-party Democrats. However, the overall pattern of about a third of the laws coming from minority-party Republicans is indicative that both parties were active and effective in the lawmaking process, striking a balance rarely found in states across the country.

Conclusion

The 2024-2025 Virginia General Assembly 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 Virginia.