



Highlights from the 221st New Jersey Legislature 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 completed 221st New Jersey Legislature (2024-2025). This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top 10 most effective lawmakers in the majority-party in the New Jersey General Assembly and Senate, the top 10 most effective minority lawmakers in the New Jersey General Assembly, and the top 5 most effective minority leaders in the New Jersey Senate. Many listed lawmakers continued their highly effective lawmaking patterns from the previous legislative sessions.
- 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. During and before the 221st New Jersey Legislature, majority-party Democratic lawmakers consistently received higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better bill outcomes in comparison to minority-party Republican lawmakers. Of the 514 laws produced during the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, only 19 were sponsored by Republicans. This presents a 25:1 lawmaking ratio between Democrats and Republicans, highlighting the evident partisan lawmaking pattern in the New Jersey Legislature.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 221st New Jersey Legislature, where many of the most effective majority-party lawmakers held committee chair positions.
- 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 top-10 lists 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 General Assembly and the State Senate in each legislative session. While the scores capture how successful an individual member of the New Jersey General Assembly 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 General Assembly 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 General Assembly 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 221st New Jersey General Assembly, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.27 compared to 1.37 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.74. In the 221st State Senate, those averages were 0.36 in the minority-party, 1.37 in the majority-party, and 1.50 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 New Jersey Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 221st New Jersey General Assembly

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (District 15)	3.33	None
2.	Robert Karabinchak (District 18)	3.17	Chair
3.	Shanique Speight (District 29)	3.11	Chair
4.	Yvonne Lopez (District 19)	3.11	Chair
5.	Carol Murphy (District 7)	3.03	None
6.	Clinton Calabrese (District 36)	2.93	Chair
7.	Louis Greenwald (District 6)	2.87	None
8.	Eliana Pintor Marin (District 29)	2.70	Chair
9.	Sterley Stanley (District 18)	2.55	Chair
10.	William Moen (District 5)	2.32	Chair

At the top of the list is Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson from District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer counties) with a score of 3.33. In the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, she introduced 270 bills, 47 of which received action beyond committee, 12 of which passed the General Assembly, and 8 of which became law.

Asm. Reynolds-Jackson joined the General Assembly in 2018. Before being elected to the General Assembly, she served for seven years as an East Ward Councilwoman, and she was the first African American woman to serve in that role. While on the City Council, she was elected as Council Vice President. Asm. Reynolds-Jackson earned a B.A. in sociology from Trenton State College, an M.S. in administration from Central Michigan University, and worked as a social worker. She currently serves as a Commissioner on the State of New Jersey Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission and the Amistad Commission, and she also serves as Vice Chair of the New Jersey Black Legislative Caucus.

Five Democratic General Assembly Members on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Asm. Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (District 15), Asm. Shanique Speight (District 29), Asm. Yvonne Lopez (District 19), Asm. Carol Murphy (District 7), Asm. Louis Greenwald (District 6).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 221st New Jersey General Assembly

The following table identifies the top ten highest scorers in the 2024-2025 General Assembly among minority-party Republicans.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Alex Sauickie (District 12)	0.87	2
2.	Aura Dunn (District 25)	0.55	3
3.	Jay Webber (District 26)	0.46	9
4.	Don Guardian (District 2)	0.46	2
5.	Michele Matsikoudis (District 21)	0.44	2
6.	Gregory McGuckin (District 10)	0.41	7
7.	Victoria Flynn (District 13)	0.38	2
8.	Nancy Munoz (District 21)	0.37	9
9.	John Azzariti (District 39)	0.34	1
10.	Dawn Fantasia (District 24)	0.32	1

Topping our list is Assemblyman Alex Sauickie of District 12 (Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean counties) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 0.87. He introduced 253 bills in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, 6 received action beyond committee, and 1 passed the General Assembly.

Asm. Sauickie assumed office in 2022. Before joining the General Assembly, Asm. Sauickie served on the Jackson Township Council from 2019-2022, and while in that role, he served as Vice President and President of the Council. He holds a B.S. in marketing and business administration from Trenton State College, and he began his career in finance software development at Merrill Lynch, before working in wealth management at Fidelity Investments for several years. He currently works as a consultant in the financial services industry. In the community, he previously served as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Kimball Medical Center Foundation.

Four Republican General Assembly Members on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Asm. Alex Sauickie (District 12), Asm. Aura Dunn (District 25), Asm. Jay Webber (District 26), and Asm. Nancy Munoz (District 21).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 221st New Jersey State Senate

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2024-2025 State Senate. Eight of the top ten most effective lawmakers in the Senate were committee chairs.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Teresa Ruiz (District 29)	3.64	None
2.	Troy Singleton (District 7)	2.59	Chair
3.	Paul Sarlo (District 36)	2.34	Chair
4.	Linda Greenstein (District 14)	2.22	Chair
5.	Vin Gopal (District 11)	2.15	Chair
6.	Nicholas Scutari (District 22)	1.88	None
7.	Patrick Diegnan (District 18)	1.60	Chair
8.	James Beach (District 6)	1.58	Chair
9.	Robert Smith (District 17)	1.46	Chair
10.	Joseph Lagana (District 38)	1.38	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Senator Teresa Ruiz from District 29 (Essex and Hudson counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 3.64. In the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, she introduced 213 bills, 71 of which received action beyond committee, 40 passed the Senate, and 29 became law.

Sen. Ruiz assumed office in 2008, and she became President Pro Tempore of the Senate from 2018-2022. She has served as the Majority Leader of the New Jersey State Senate since 2022. When elected, Sen. Ruiz was the first Puerto Rican to serve in the New Jersey Senate, and she is the highest-ranking Latina legislator in the state's history. She holds a bachelor's degree from Drew University, and she is a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School's Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program. In 2010, she was an Aspen Institute Rodel Fellow, which is a leadership development fellowship program for elected leaders. Sen. Ruiz is the vice chair of the Essex County Democratic Party, she is the deputy chief of staff to Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, and she was a delegate at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016.

Eight legislators on the list were among the top 10 highest-scoring Democratic Senators in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Sen. Teresa Ruiz (District 29), Sen. Troy Singleton (District 7), Sen. Paul Sarlo (District 36), Sen. Linda Greenstein (District 14), Sen. Vin Gopal (District 11), Sen. Nicholas Scutari (District 22), Sen. Patrick Diegnan (District 18), and Sen. Robert Smith (District 17).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 221st New Jersey State Senate

The following table identifies the five most effective Republican lawmakers in the 2024-2025 State Senate.

Top Five Senate Republicans (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Anthony Bucco (District 25)	1.14	4
2.	Kristin Corrado (District 40)	0.67	5
3.	Carmen Amato (District 9)	0.55	1
4.	Robert Singer (District 30)	0.54	16
5.	Joseph Pennacchio (District 26)	0.31	9

Senator Anthony Bucco of District 25 (Morris and Passaic counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions with a score of 1.14. He introduced 241 bills in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, 20 of which received action beyond committee, 8 passed the Senate, and 5 became law.

Sen. Bucco joined the State Senate in 2019, and served as Minority Whip from 2022-2023, before being elected Minority Leader in 2023. Before joining the Senate, Sen. Bucco represented New Jersey's 25th District in the General Assembly from 2010-2019, and he was the Republican Whip from 2016-2017, and the Deputy Republican Leader from 2012-2016. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Lycoming College and a J.D. from Seton Hall School of Law. He currently is a partner at Murphy McKeon, P.C., where he specializes in local government law. In the community, he is a founding member of the Daytop Drug and Alcohol Center, and he has served on the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. In addition, Sen. Bucco has served as a Morris County Commissioner, and he is a member of the Boonton Volunteer Fire Department and the Morris County Sheriff's Crime Stoppers program.

Two legislators on the list were among the top 5 highest-scoring Senate Republicans in the 2022-2023 legislative sessions: Sen. Anthony Bucco (District 25) and Sen. Robert Singer (District 30).

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 General Assembly Members and Senators with the longest active streaks of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2024-2025 legislative sessions.

**State General Assembly Members 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.	Carol Murphy (D-7)	4 Legislative Sessions	3.03	4 Legislative Sessions
2.	Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D-15)	3 Legislative Sessions	3.33	4 Legislative Sessions
3.	Aura Dunn (R-25)	3 Legislative Sessions	0.55	3 Legislative Sessions

Democratic Assemblywoman Carol Murphy of District 7 (Burlington County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 3.03 in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions. During the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, she proposed 319 bills, 41 of which received action beyond committee, 16 passed the General Assembly, and 9 became law. In addition, Asm. Murphy has ranked among the top 10 highest-scoring Democratic General Assembly Members since 2020.

Asm. Murphy assumed office in 2018, and she was the first woman to represent the 7th Legislative District in 20 years. While in the General Assembly, she served as the Deputy Majority Leader from 2020-2022, and the Majority Whip from 2022-2026. She currently serves as the Deputy Speaker. She began her career at the New Jersey Schools Development Authority, where she helped establish a transparent record-keeping system and modernize New Jersey public schools. She later served as Chief of Staff and Policy Director for the New Jersey State Legislature, helping develop numerous bills addressing key public policy issues.

**State Senators with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations”
(through the 2024-2025 Legislative Session)**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>SLES (2024-2025)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Teresa Ruiz (D-29)	4 Legislative Sessions	3.64	9 Legislative Sessions
2.	Troy Singleton (D-7)	4 Legislative Sessions	2.59	4 Legislative Sessions
3.	Anthony M. Bucco (R-25)	4 Legislative Sessions	1.14	4 Legislative Sessions
4.	Vin Gopal (D-11)	3 Legislative Sessions	2.15	4 Legislative Sessions

Senator Teresa Ruiz (D) of District 29 (Essex and Hudson counties) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 4 legislative sessions and an SLES of 3.64 in the 2024-2025 legislative sessions. Sen. Ruiz (as noted above) was the top-scoring Democratic Senator in the 221st New Jersey Legislature. In addition, Sen. Ruiz has ranked among the top 10 highest-scoring Democratic Senators in the New Jersey Senate since 2018.

High-Performing Freshmen

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2024-2025)</u>
1.	Luanne Peterpaul (D-11)	1.79
2.	Margie Donlon (D-11)	1.65
3.	Dan Hutchison (D-4)	1.55
4.	John Azzariti (R-39)	0.34
5.	Dawn Fantasia (R-24)	0.32
6.	Michael Inganamort (R-24)	0.23

The General Assembly member with the highest SLES and who also scored "Above Expectations" during her freshman term was Democratic Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul (Monmouth County), with a score of 1.79. During the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, Asm. Peterpaul introduced 38 bills, 19 of which received action beyond committee, 12 passed the General Assembly, and 10 became law.

Asm. Peterpaul holds a bachelor’s degree from Duquesne University and a J.D. from Seton Hall School of Law. She is currently the managing partner of Peterpaul Law, where she focuses on labor and employment law and general litigation. Before opening her own firm, she served as an

assistant Essex County Prosecutor and as a Municipal Judge for the Cities of Long Branch and Asbury Park. In the community, Asm. Peterpaul is the former Chair of the Garden State Equality Action Fund and helped advocate and bring marriage equality to New Jersey. In addition, she has lectured on employment law and litigation to numerous institutions, including the New Jersey Judicial College, Rutgers University, and Kean University.

Freshmen Senator Who Was “Above Expectations” (2024-2025 Legislative Sessions)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2024-2025)</u>
1.	Carmen Amato (R-9)	0.55

The State Senator with the highest SLES who also scored "Above Expectations" during his freshman term was Republican Senator Carmen Amato (Ocean County) with a score of 0.55. During the 2024-2025 legislative sessions, Sen. Amato introduced 138 bills, 13 of which received action beyond committee, 5 passed the Senate, and 1 became law.

Before joining the Senate, Sen. Amato was a member of the Berkeley Township Board of Education from 1993-2000, the Central Regional Board of Education from 2000-2005, the Berkeley Township Council from 2006-2011, and he served as the Berkeley Township Mayor from 2012-2024. During his tenure as Mayor, he helped initiate recovery efforts following Hurricane Sandy. In the community, he has been involved in numerous civic organizations, including the NJ Conference of Mayors, the National School Boards Association, the Central Ocean County Regional Italian American Club, and the Berkeley Township Recreation Advisory Committee. He has also been involved in statewide Republican Party Leadership and served as the 3rd District Alternate Delegate for the 2012 Republican National Convention, and as a Sustaining Member of the Republican National Committee and New Jersey State Committee.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, consistent with a majority-party advantage in most states, a pattern of partisan lawmaking is clearly on display in New Jersey. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the average scores for minority-party Republicans in New Jersey in 2024-25 are lower than that in the Senate at 0.36 and lower still in the General Assembly at a value of 0.27. Such exclusion of minority-party members from a significant lawmaking role is not new, but stretches back more than a decade in New Jersey. Across the legislature as a whole, since the start of our data in 1996, the minority-party has an average SLES of 0.43 in the New Jersey legislature, well below the national average.

These partisan differences translate into a gap in the number of laws produced by Republicans relative to Democrats. Of the 514 laws produced in the 2024-25 sessions, only 19 of them were sponsored by Republicans. This approximately 25:1 ratio in laws coming from Democrats to those coming from Republicans is a much starker partisan difference than typically seen across the country, and is significantly out of proportion with the number of seats held by the parties in the legislature.

Conclusion

The 221st New Jersey Legislature 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 New Jersey.