Highlights from the 82nd Nevada Legislature (2023-2024) 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 82nd Nevada Legislature legislative session. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective lawmakers in each party in the State Assembly and State Senate, including many who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous State Assemblies.
- We identify those lawmakers with the longest streaks of being in our prestigious "Exceeds 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. Although some individual minority-party legislators achieved high lawmaking effectiveness, their average scores remain lower than their majority-party counterparts due to structural barriers that they face in trying to advance their agendas.
- Across both chambers, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. In addition, lawmaking effectiveness is a consistent trait among legislators, with several legislators appearing among the top-10 most effective lawmakers for both the 82nd and 81st 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 State Assembly 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 State 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 82nd Nevada State Assembly, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.62, compared to 1.19 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.29. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.51 in the minority party, 1.30 in the majority party, and 1.28 among committee chairs.

We then label each lawmaker as "Exceeding 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 Top Ten lists highlighted in the tables below. Given the substantial lawmaking benefit that follows from being in the majority party, ranking the entire Nevada State Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 82nd State Assembly

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 82nd State Assembly. Unsurprisingly, given the power of committee chairs, five of the top ten held these important positions.

Top Ten List—Assembly Democrats (82nd Legislative Session)

	__Name__	__LES__	__Committee Chair__
1.	**Steve Yeager (District 9)**	2.59	None
2.	**Sandra Jauregui (District 41)**	2.32	None
3.	**Tracy Brown-May (District 42)**	2.09	None
4.	**Cecelia Gonzalez (District 16)**	1.87	None
5.	**Selena Torres (District 3)**	1.73	Chair
6.	**Michelle Gorelow (District 35)**	1.59	Chair
7.	**Howard Watts (District 15)**	1.57	Chair
8.	**Daniele Monroe-Moreno (District 1)**	1.41	Chair
9.	**Lesley Cohen (District 29)**	1.39	Chair
10.	**Duy Nguyen (District 8)**	1.21	None

At the top of the list is Assemblymember Steve Yeager from District 9 (Southwest Las Vegas) with a score of 2.59. In the 82nd legislative session, he introduced 14 bills, 14 received action in committee, 13 received action beyond committee, 13 passed the State Assembly, and 12 became law. He has served in the Nevada Assembly since 2016 and was voted Speaker of the Nevada Assembly in 2022. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 2001 with a B.A. in history and Spanish, then attended Cornell Law School, graduating with a J.D. in 2004. He moved to Nevada in 2009 and worked as a chief deputy public defender of Clark County until his election

to the Nevada Assembly in 2016. Five Democratic representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scores in the 81st legislative session, Assemblymember Steve Yeager (District 9), Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui (District 41), Assemblymember Selena Torres (District 3), Assemblymember Howard Watts (District 15) and Assemblymember Lesley Cohen (District 29).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 82nd Nevada State Assembly

The following table identifies the top five highest-scorers in the 82nd State Assembly among minority-party Republicans.

Top Five List—Assembly Republicans (82nd Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Seniority
1.	Philip 'PK' O'Neill (District 40)	1.98	2
2.	Melissa Hardy (District 22)	1.05	3
3.	Brian Hibbetts (District 13)	0.85	1
4.	Gregory Hafen (District 36)	0.68	3
5.	Heidi Kasama (District 2)	0.66	2

Topping our list is Assemblymember Philip 'PK' O'Neill of District 40 (Carson City, Storey, Washoe counties), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.98. Assemblymember O'Neill is the Nevada State Assembly Minority Leader. He served from 2014-2016, and again from 2020-2025. He introduced 17 bills in the 82nd legislative session, 11 received action in committee, 9 received action beyond committee, 8 passed the State Assembly, and 5 became law. O'Neill graduated from Sierra Nevada College, where he received a B.S. in business management. Prior to his election to the Nevada State Assembly, he spent four decades in law enforcement. Three Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scores in the 81st legislative session, Assemblymember Philip 'PK' O'Neill (District 40), Assemblymember Melissa Hardy (District 22), and Assemblymember Gregory Hafen (District 36).

Highly Effective Democrat Lawmakers in the 82nd State Senate

Top Five List—Senate Democrats (82nd Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Committee Chair
1.	Nicole Cannizzaro (District 6)	2.03	None
2.	Dallas Harris (District 11)	1.98	Chair
3.	Melanie Scheible (District 9)	1.53	Chair
4.	Dina Neal (District 4)	1.42	Chair
5.	James Ohrenschall (District 21)	1.40	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Sen. Nicole Cannizzaro from District 6 (Las Vegas) was ranked first in terms of her SLES score, with a score of 2.03. She was also among the top-10 Democratic highest scorers in the 81st legislative session. She introduced 20 bills, 17 received action in committee, 18 received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 15 became law. She has served in the 6th District since 2016 and is the first woman to serve as the Majority Leader of the Nevada Senate. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and management from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2006, and a J.D. at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2010. She worked for more than a decade at the Clark County District Attorney's Office, then she returned to private practice in 2022.

In the 82nd legislative session, we also find that eight of the top-10 Democratic State Senators are also committee chairs. Eight Senators on the list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 81st legislative session. These Senators are Sen. Nicole Cannizzaro (District 6), Sen. Dallas Harris (District 11), Sen. Melanie Scheible (District 9), Sen. Dina Neal (District 4), Sen. James Ohrenschall (District 21), Sen. Roberta Lange (District 21), Sen. Marilyn Dondero Loop (District 8), and Sen. Patricia Spearman (District 1).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 82nd State Senate

Top Three List—Senate Republicans (82nd Legislative Session)

	Name	LES	Seniority
1.	Heidi Seevers Gansert (District 15)	1.09	4
2.	Pete Goicoechea (District 19)	0.74	6
3.	Scott Hammond (District 18)	0.54	6

Sen. Heidi Seevers Gansert from District 15 (southwestern Washoe County) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 82nd legislative session, with a score of 1.09. She introduced 21 bills, 11 received action in committee, 8 received action beyond committee, 8 passed the Senate, and 7 became law. Sen. Gansert has been representing the 15th District since 2016 and was elected as the Senate Minority Leader in 2022. Gansert earned a B.S. in engineering from Santa Clara University and a M.B.A from University of Nevada, Reno. Gansert worked as a management consultant for medical firms and a resource planning engineer for NV Energy.

Turning to the Republican Senators in the 82nd legislative session, we find that there is substantial overlap between the highest performers on the top-10 list for the 82nd legislative session and the preceding top-10 list for Republican legislators in the 81st legislative session, with Sen. Heidi Seevers Gansert (District 15), Sen. Pete Goicoechea (District 19), Sen. Scott Hammond (District 18), Sen. Ira Hansen (District 14), and Sen. Carrie Buck (District 5) appearing on both lists.

Other Findings

In terms of broader trends, our data show a partisan turn in lawmaking in Nevada over the past couple of terms. From 2011-20, both majority-party and minority-party lawmakers were active partners in lawmaking. The gap between their average SLES was less than 0.4 points in the

Assembly and less than 0.3 points in the Senate. In the past two terms, however, those gaps have risen to nearly 0.6 in the Assembly and nearly 0.8 in the Senate. This means that majority-party Democrats have been limiting the influence of minority-party Republicans more significantly in recent years than before.

Research at the Center for Effective Lawmaking suggests that bipartisanship enhances lawmaking effectiveness, even for members of the majority party. Thus this recent turn toward greater partisanship could be harmful for both parties and for effective lawmaking for Nevada on the whole.

Conclusion

The 82nd Nevada 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 Nevada.