



Highlights from the 2020-2023 Louisiana Legislature Legislative Effectiveness Scores

Craig Volden and Alan E. Wiseman, Co-Directors, Center for Effective Lawmaking

Paige Higginson-Rollins, Program Director for State Legislatures, Center for Effective Lawmaking

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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 2020-2023 Louisiana 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 House of Representatives and the top-10 most effective Republican lawmakers and top-5 most effective Democratic lawmakers in the State Senate, including many who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking 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. This is a fairly new phenomenon in Louisiana. Prior to the 2020-2023 term, lawmakers from both parties scored about equally in their State Legislative Effectiveness Scores and succeeded about equally in moving their proposals into law. In the most recent term, however, majority-party Republicans used their structural advantages to advance more of their own bills than those of Democrats, in both the House and the Senate.
- 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 (or top-5) most effective lawmakers for both the 2020-2023 and 2016-2019 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 2020-2023 Louisiana House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.80, compared to 1.10 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.30. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.83 in the minority party, 1.80 in the majority party, and 1.20 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 Louisiana State Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2020-2023 Louisiana House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2020-2023 House of Representatives. Three of the top ten were committee chairs.

Top Ten List—House Republicans (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Jerome Zeringue (District 52)	3.50	Chair
2.	Stephanie Hiltferty (District 94)	2.34	None
3.	John Stefanski (District 42)	2.30	None
4.	Tanner Magee (District 53)	2.27	None
5.	Rick Edmonds (District 66)	2.10	None
6.	Clay Schexnayder (District 81)	2.07	None
7.	Gregory Miller (District 56)	2.06	None
8.	Tony Bacala (District 59)	1.92	None
9.	Jack McFarland (District 13)	1.92	Chair
10.	Paula Davis (District 69)	1.71	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Jerome Zeringue from District 52 (Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes) with a score of 3.50. In the 2020-2023 legislative session, he introduced 84 bills, 65 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 61 passed the House, and 49 became law. He has served in the Louisiana House of Representatives since 2016. He received his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Louisiana State University in zoology and fisheries biology. Two Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2016-2019 legislative session: Representative Jerome Zeringue (District 52) and Representative Gregory Miller (District 56).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2020-2023 Louisiana House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top ten highest-scorers in the 2020-2023 House of Representatives among minority-party Democrats.

Top Ten List—House Democrats (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Matthew Willard (District 97)	1.66	1
2.	Royce Duplessis (District 93)	1.65	2
3.	Jason Hughes (District 100)	1.61	1
4.	Aimee Freeman (District 98)	1.41	1
5.	Edward James (District 101)	1.37	3
6.	Mandie Landry (District 91)	1.34	1
7.	Edmond Jordan (District 29)	1.33	2
8.	Jeremy LaCombe (District 18)	1.15	1
9.	Kyle Green (District 83)	1.14	1
10.	Dustin Miller (District 40)	1.11	2

Topping our list is Representative Matthew Willard of District 97 (Orleans Parish), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.66. He introduced 44 bills in the 2020-2023 legislative session, 33 received action in committee and action beyond committee, 26 passed the House of Representatives, and 24 became law. Prior to being elected to the Louisiana state legislature, Representative Willard was an account executive at a communications firm and a senior manager for marketing and communications. He received his bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of New Orleans. He was first elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives in 2020 and elected as the leader of the House Democratic Caucus in 2023. One Democratic Representative on our current list was also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2016-2019 legislative session: Representative Edward James (District 101).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2020-2023 State Senate

Top Ten List—Senate Republicans (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Sharon Hewitt (District 1)	2.56	Chair
2.	R. Bret Allain (District 21)	2.29	Chair
3.	Franklin Foil (District 16)	1.81	Chair
4.	Stewart Cathey (District 33)	1.47	Chair
5.	Beth Mizell (District 12)	1.47	None
6.	Kirk Talbot (District 10)	1.43	Chair
7.	Fred Mills (District 22)	1.40	Chair
8.	Patrick McMath (District 11)	1.32	None
9.	Mike Reese (District 30)	1.26	None
10.	Barrow Peacock (District 37)	1.24	Chair

Among Republicans in the State Senate, Sen. Sharon Hewitt from District 1 (Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany Parishes) was ranked first in terms of her SLES score, with a score of 2.56. In the 2020-2023 session she introduced 76 bills, 54 received action in committee, 55 received action beyond committee, 50 passed the Senate, and 42 became law. She has represented the 1st District in the State Senate since 2016. Prior to being elected to the State Senate she earned a bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University in mechanical engineering. After graduation she worked at Shell Oil in several different positions.

In the 2020-2023 legislative session, we also find that eight of the top-10 Republican State Senators are also committee chairs. Two Senators on the list were also among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2015-2018 legislative session. These Senators are Sen. Fred Mills (District 22) and Sen. Barrow Peacock (District 37).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2020-2023 State Senate

Top Five List—Senate Democrats (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Cleo Fields (District 14)	1.66	1
2.	Regina Barrow (District 15)	1.47	2
3.	W. Jay Luneau (District 29)	1.33	2
4.	Katrina Jackson (District 34)	1.32	1
5.	Gary Smith (District 19)	1.13	3

Sen. Cleo Fields from District 14 (East Baton Rouge Parish) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2020-2023 legislative session, with a score of 1.66. He introduced 80 bills, 33 received action in committee, 34 received action beyond committee, 29 passed the Senate, and 27 became law. Sen. Fields earned a bachelor's degree and J.D. from Southern University. He has been elected to several offices during his life, including the Louisiana State Senate, where he had previously served several previous, non-continuous, terms, including serving for 12 years, between 1996-2007. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2024.

Turning to the other Democratic Senators in the 2020-2023 legislative session, we find that there is one Senator that appears on both the top-5 list for the 2020-2023 legislative session and the preceding top-5 list for Democratic legislators in the 2016-2019 legislative session: Sen. Regina Barrow (District 15).

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 Representatives with the longest active streaks of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2020-2023 legislative session.

State Representatives with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations” (through the 2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	Name	Streak	SLES (2020-2023)	Seniority
1.	Jerome Zeringue (R-52)	2 Legislative Sessions	3.50	2 Legislative Sessions
2.	Stephanie Hilferty (R-94)	2 Legislative Sessions	2.34	2 Legislative Sessions
3.	Tanner Magee (R-53)	2 Legislative Sessions	2.27	2 Legislative Sessions
4.	Rick Edmonds (R-66)	2 Legislative Sessions	2.10	2 Legislative Sessions
5.	Gregory Miller (R-56)	2 Legislative Sessions	2.06	3 Legislative Sessions
6.	Tony Bacala (R-59)	2 Legislative Sessions	1.92	2 Legislative Sessions
7.	Joseph Marino (I-85)	2 Legislative Sessions	1.90	2 Legislative Sessions

Representative Jerome Zeringue (R) of District 52 (Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes) had the longest streak of “Above Expectations,” 2 legislative sessions, with a SLES score in the most recent legislative session of 3.50. He also earned the top SLES score for Republican Representatives in the 2020-2023 legislative session.

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 freshmen 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” (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2020-2023)</u>
1.	Matthew Willard (D-97)	1.66
2.	Beau Beaulieu (R-48)	1.65
3.	Jason Hughes (D-100)	1.60
4.	Larry Frieman (R-74)	1.50
5.	Aimee Freeman (D-98)	1.41
6.	Mandie Landry (D-91)	1.34
7.	Jeremy LaCombe (D-18)	1.15
8.	Kyle Green (D-83)	1.14

The State Representative with the highest “Above Expectation” score during his freshman term was Representative Matthew Willard (Orleans Parish) with a score of 1.66. He also earned the top SLES score for Democratic Representatives for the 2020-2023 legislative session.

Freshmen Senators “Above Expectations” (2020-2023 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2020-2023)</u>
1.	Katrina Jackson (D-34)	1.32

Senator Katrina Jackson (D), who represented District 34 (Concordia, East Carroll, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, and Tensas Parishes) was the one Freshman Senator whose state legislative effectiveness score (1.32) was “Above Expectations” in the 2020-2023 legislative session.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, we found a lawmaking gap opening up between majority-party Republicans and minority-party Democrats in the 2020-2023 legislative term. In the two prior

terms, there was no noticeable gap in the SLES or the average number of laws produced between those in the majority party and those in the minority party. In contrast, in the most recent term, Republicans in both the House and the Senate averaged a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.1, compared to 0.8 for Democrats.

Conclusion

The 2020-2023 Louisiana 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 Louisiana.