



Highlights from the 152nd Delaware 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 recently completed 152nd Delaware General Assembly legislative session. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective legislators in the majority party across both chambers, the top-5 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top-3 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the Senate. Many of the legislators who we identify 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.
- We find that, consistent with our published research findings, there is an overall lawmaking benefit from being in the majority party. This is not a new phenomenon in Delaware. Prior to the 2023-2024 legislative session, lawmakers from the majority party (Democrats) consistently received higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better outcomes in advancing their legislative agenda into law. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, Democrats continued to utilize their structural advantages to advance more of their own bills than those of Republicans, in both the House and the Senate.
- Consistent with prior research, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. The benefit of committee chairmanship is especially evident in Delaware, where eight out of the top-ten State House Representatives in the majority party held committee chair positions during the 2023-2024 legislative session. In the Senate, all majority-party Senators hold committee chair positions, making it impossible to separate the effects of chair positions from those of majority-party membership.

- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one legislative session are likely to remain effective lawmakers in other sessions, as several legislators who we identify as the most effective lawmakers in the 2023-2024 legislative session were also among the most effective lawmakers list in the 2021-2022 legislative session.

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 2023-2024 Delaware House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.34 compared to 1.40 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.69. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.32 in the minority party, 1.27 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 Delaware General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 152nd Delaware House of Representatives

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Kimberly Williams (District 19)	4.25	Chair
2.	William Bush (District 29)	3.29	Chair
3.	Edward Osienski (District 24)	3.10	Chair
4.	Paul Baumbach (District 23)	2.55	Chair
5.	Krista Griffith (District 12)	2.36	Chair

6.	Valerie Longhurst (District 15)	2.25	None
7.	Sherry Dorsey Walker (District 3)	2.02	Chair
8.	Eric Morrison (District 27)	1.95	None
9.	William Carson (District 28)	1.80	Chair
10.	Debra Heffernan (District 6)	1.75	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Kimberly Williams from District 19 (New Castle County) with a score of 4.25. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 41 bills, 35 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, and 31 passed the House and became law. Rep. Williams has served in the Delaware House of Representatives since 2013 and is a lifelong resident of New Castle County. She was previously employed as an agent with Berkshire Home Services and as an office manager with a Delaware-based union electrical contractor. Before joining the General Assembly, Rep. Williams served as a board member and vice president of the Red Clay School Board and was consistently involved in other education-based organizations across the community, such as the Forest Oak Elementary School PTA.

Eight Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Kimberly Williams (District 19), Rep. William Bush (District 29), Rep. Edward Osienski (District 24), Rep. Paul Baumbach (District 23), Rep. Krista Griffith (District 12), Rep. Valerie Longhurst (District 15), Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker (District 3), and Rep. Debra Heffernan (District 6).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 152nd Delaware 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 Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Timothy Dukes (District 40)	1.16	6
2.	Daniel Short (District 39)	0.72	9
3.	Jeffrey Spiegelman (District 11)	0.57	6
4.	Bryan Shupe (District 36)	0.48	3
5.	Michael Smith (District 22)	0.43	3

Topping our list is Representative Timothy Dukes of District 40 (Western Sussex County) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.16. He introduced 11 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session; 10 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the House of Representatives; and 7 became law.

Representative Dukes is a Pastor at Central Worship Center in Laurel, and he also holds leadership positions in various community organizations, including the Potomac Leadership Council and the Laurel Ministerial Association. He received his bachelor’s degree from Valley Forge University in Chester County, PA. Rep. Dukes was first elected to the Delaware House of Representatives in 2012 and was selected as the House Minority Whip for the 150th and 151st General Assembly. During the 153rd General Assembly (2025-2026), Representative Dukes was elected as the House Minority Leader.

Two Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Representative Daniel Short (District 39) and Representative Michael Smith (District 22).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 152nd Delaware State Senate

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Kyle Gay (District 5)	2.49	Chair
2.	Spiros Mantzavinos (District 7)	1.74	Chair
3.	Bryan Townsend (District 11)	1.57	Chair
4.	Sarah McBride (District 1)	1.53	Chair
5.	Nicole Poore (District 12)	1.50	Chair
6.	Stephanie Hansen (District 10)	1.43	Chair
7.	Laura Sturgeon (District 4)	1.38	Chair
8.	Jack Walsh (District 9)	1.27	Chair
9.	David Sokola (District 8)	1.24	Chair
10.	Russ Huxtable (District 6)	1.20	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Representative Kyle Gay from District 5 (North Wilmington) ranked first with a SLES score of 2.49. In the 2023-2024 session, she introduced 34 bills, all of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, and 30 passed the Senate and became law.

Sen. Gay represented the 5th District in the State Senate from 2021 to 2025. In 2024, she was elected as the 27th Lieutenant Governor of Delaware. She earned a bachelor’s degree in international relations and history from Brown University and a J.D. from Boston University. Before entering public office, Lt. Governor Gay worked as a Deputy Attorney General at the Delaware Department of Justice and as a clerk for the Delaware Superior Court.

In the 2023-2024 legislative session, all 10 of the top-10 Democratic State Senators are committee chairs.

Seven legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Kyle Gay (District 5), Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos (District 7), Sen. Bryan Townsend (District 11), Sen. Sarah McBride (District 1), Sen. Nicole Poore (District 12), Sen. Stephanie Hansen (District 10), and Sen. Jack Walsh (District 9).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 152nd Delaware State Senate

Top Three List—Senate Republicans (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Eric Buckson (District 16)	0.45	1
2.	David Lawson (District 15)	0.42	7
3.	Brian Pettyjohn (District 19)	0.36	6

Sen. Eric Buckson from District 16 (Southern Dover) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 0.45. During the 2023-2024 session he introduced 11 bills; 5 of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, and passed the Senate; and 4 of which became law.

Rep. Buckson is a lifelong Kent County resident and has served in the State Senate since 2022. He earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Delaware in sports management and physical education. Before joining the Assembly, Sen. Buckson was the District 4 Commissioner of the Kent County Levy Court from 2016 to 2022. In his professional life, Sen. Buckson was a physical education teacher and coach at Polytech High School. He retired in 2022.

Two of the most effective Republican lawmakers in the Senate also appear on the top-3 list for the preceding 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. David Lawson (District 15) and Sen. Brian Pettyjohn (District 19).

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 2023-2024 legislative session.

**State Representatives with Longest Streak of “Above Expectations”
(through the 2023-2024 Legislative Session)**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Streak</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Kimberly Williams (D-19)	5 Legislative Sessions	4.25	6 Legislative Sessions
2.	William Bush (D-29)	3 Legislative Sessions	3.29	3 Legislative Sessions

Representative Kimberly Williams (D) of District 19 (New Castle County) had the longest streak of “Above Expectations” with 5 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 4.25 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. She also earned the top SLES score for Democratic Representatives in the 2021-2022 legislative session and has consistently ranked among the top 5 most effective Democratic lawmakers in the House since 2015.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, partisanship continues to be strongly associated with lawmaking effectiveness in Delaware. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the scores for minority-party members in Delaware have been around half of that, averaging around 0.3.

While Republicans are disadvantaged at lawmaking, they have not been completely shut out of the legislative process. For example, in the 2023-2024 term, Republican legislators introduced 50 bills that became law. In contrast, the number of laws sponsored by Democrats in that term totaled 473. This nearly 10-1 ratio is significantly out of proportion to the number of seats the parties hold in the chambers, and well beyond what is seen in most legislatures across the country.

Conclusion

The 152nd Delaware General Assembly 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 Delaware.