Highlights from the 2023-2024 Connecticut General Assembly State Legislative Effectiveness Scores

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3/3/2026

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 2023-2024 Connecticut 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 in both chambers, the top-10 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top-5 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the Senate. Many listed lawmakers continued their highly effective lawmaking patterns from the previous legislative session.
- 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. Before and during the 2023-2024 legislative session, majority-party Democratic lawmakers consistently received higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better bill outcomes. That said, the gap in effective lawmaking between Democrats and Republicans narrowed in 2023-2024 to its smallest difference since the power-sharing agreement in the Senate in 2017-2018. Indeed, Republicans produced nearly as many laws per lawmaker as did Democrats during this past term.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness (although given the small size of the Senate, nearly all majority-party members serve as chairs). This phenomenon is highlighted during the 2023-2024 Connecticut General Assembly, where the majority 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 or top-5 lists in both the 2023-2024 and 2021-2022 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 2023-2024 Connecticut House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.83 compared to 1.10 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.81. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.81 in the minority party, 1.08 in the majority party, and 1.10 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 Connecticut General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Connecticut House of Representatives

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

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

	__Name__	__LES__	__Committee Chair__
1.	**Travis Simms (District 140)**	10.37	None
2.	**Matt Blumenthal (District 147)**	4.49	Chair
3.	**Anthony Nolan (District 39)**	4.24	Chair
4.	**Eleni Kavros DeGraw (District 17)**	3.94	Chair
5.	**Joseph Gresko (District 121)**	3.94	Chair
6.	**Matthew Ritter (District 1)**	3.70	Chair

	Name	LES	Seniority
7.	David Michel (District 146)	3.29	None
8.	Geraldo Reyes (District 75)	3.01	None
9.	Cristin McCarthy Vahey (District 133)	2.48	Chair
10.	Gary Turco (District 27)	2.33	None

At the top of the list is Representative Travis Simms from District 140 (Norwalk) with a score of 10.37. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 61 bills, 59 received action in committee, 52 received action beyond committee, 25 passed the House of Representatives, and 21 became law.

Rep. Simms is a former 8-year member of the Norwalk Common Council. While on the Council, he served in a variety of leadership positions, including as Minority Leader and Chairman of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs. In the community, he is involved in multiple development organizations, such as the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Coordinating Committee and Action for Bridgeport Community Development. Rep. Simms has a particular passion for sustainability and preserving green space. Professionally, Rep. Simms is a former 2-Time World Champion Boxer.

Five Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Joseph Gresko (District 121), Rep. Matthew Ritter (District 1), Rep. David Michel (District 146), Rep. Geraldo Reyes (District 75), and Rep. Gary Turco (District 27).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Connecticut House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top-ten highest scorers in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives among minority-party Republicans.

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

	Name	LES	Seniority
1.	Tom Delnicki (District 14)	5.97	4
2.	Craig Fishbein (District 90)	5.74	4
3.	Aundre Bumgardner (District 41)	4.04	2
4.	William Pizzuto (District 71)	1.98	2
5.	Vincent Candelora (District 86)	1.75	9
6.	Martin Foncello (District 107)	1.45	1
7.	Timothy Ackert (District 8)	1.40	7
8.	Kathleen McCarty (District 38)	1.26	3
9.	Greg Howard (District 43)	1.22	2
10.	Douglas Dubitsky (District 47)	1.18	5

Topping our list is Representative Tom Delnicki of District 14 (South Windsor), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 5.97. He introduced 44 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 30 received action in committee, 25 received action beyond committee, 18 passed the House, and 14 became law.

Rep. Delnicki has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2017. Before joining the House, he was a long-term councilman on the South Windsor Town Council, where he served as Deputy Mayor and Mayor twice. Rep. Delnicki was also a member of the South Windsor Board of Education during his early career. He is a lifelong South Windsor resident and a graduate of the University of Connecticut. Until retirement, he was employed with the Metropolitan District as a Facilities Manager.

Three Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Tom Delnicki (District 14), Rep. Craig Fishbein (District 90), and Rep. Vincent Candelora (District 86).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Connecticut State Senate

The following table identifies the ten highest scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 State Senate. All ten of the top ten most effective Democratic lawmakers in the Senate were committee chairs.

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

	Name	**LES**	**Committee Chair**
1.	**Saud Anwar (District 3)**	3.68	Chair
2.	**Martin Looney (District 11)**	3.61	Chair
3.	**Herron Gaston (District 23)**	1.89	Chair
4.	**Mae Flexer (District 29)**	1.81	Chair
5.	**Gary Winfield (District 10)**	1.69	Chair
6.	**Patricia Miller (District 27)**	1.28	Chair
7.	**MD Rahman (District 4)**	1.19	Chair
8.	**Catherine Osten (District 19)**	1.08	Chair
9.	**James Maroney (District 14)**	1.06	Chair
10.	**Julie Kushner (District 24)**	1.04	Chair

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Senator Saud Anwar from District 3 (East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington, and South Windsor) ranked first with a SLES score of 3.68. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 163 bills, 89 received action in committee, 63 received action beyond committee, 27 passed the Senate, and 17 became law. He is the current Deputy President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

Before joining the Senate, Sen. Anwar served on the South Windsor Town Council from 2011-2019. During his time on the Town Council, he served two terms as Mayor. Sen. Anwar is an

M.D., specializing in lung disease and critical care medicine. He is the Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at Manchester Memorial and Rockville General Hospital. Sen. Anwar is known for his philanthropic work after 9/11, where he organized volunteers, testified before the Committee on Homeland Security of the 109th Congress, and served as a consultant on the FBI's Multicultural Advisory Committee. Locally, he is a founding member of the South Windsor Hunger Action Team and a board member of the South Windsor Community Foundation.

Four legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Senate Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Saud Anwar (District 3), Sen. Martin Looney (District 11), Sen. Gary Winfield (District 10), and Sen. Catherine Osten (District 19).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Connecticut State Senate

The following table identifies the top-5 scorers in the 2023-2024 State Senate among minority-party Republicans.

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

	__Name__	__LES__	__Seniority__
1.	**Robert Sampson (District 16)**	2.11	3
2.	**Heather Bond Somers (District 18)**	1.32	4
3.	**Kevin Kelly (District 21)**	1.04	7
4.	**Tony Hwang (District 28)**	0.95	5
5.	**John Kissel (District 7)**	0.90	15

Senator Robert Sampson from District 16 (Cheshire, Prospect, Southington, Wolcott, and Waterbury) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session, with a score of 2.11. He introduced 185 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 31 received action in committee, 27 received action beyond committee, 17 passed the Senate, and 9 became law.

Sen. Sampson joined the Senate in 2019 and is the Senior Deputy Republican Leader. From 2011-2018 he served as a District 80 Representative of the Connecticut House. Rep. Sampson is a lifelong Connecticut resident and holds a degree in marketing from Central Connecticut State University. Professionally, he has an established career in real estate, working as a realtor and regional recruiter for Realty 3. He also works as a consultant in the insurance industry. Throughout his time in politics, he has been recognized with various accolades, including being named the 2021 Connecticut Conference of Municipalities "Legislative Champion of the Year."

Four legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Senate Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Robert Sampson (District 16), Sen. Heather Bond Somers (District 18), Sen. Kevin Kelly (District 21), and Sen. Tony Hwang (District 28).

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)

	Name	Streak	SLES (2023-2024)	Seniority
1.	Craig Fishbein (R-90)	4 Legislative Sessions	5.74	4 Legislative Sessions
2.	Joseph Gresko (D-121)	4 Legislative Sessions	3.93	5 Legislative Sessions
3.	Tom Delnicki (R-14)	3 Legislative Sessions	5.97	4 Legislative Sessions
4.	David Michel (D-146)	3 Legislative Sessions	2.29	3 Legislative Sessions
5.	Christine Conley (D-40)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.86	4 Legislative Sessions

Representative Craig Fishbein (R) of District 90 (Middlefield and Wallingford) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 5.74 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Fishbein proposed 59 bills, 35 received action in committee, 27 received action beyond committee, 13 passed the House, and 10 became law. Rep. Fishbein has consistently ranked in the top-5 of most-effective Republican lawmakers since the 2017-2018 legislative session.

Rep. Fishbein was first elected to the House during a special election in 2016. He holds an undergraduate degree and a J.D. from Quinnipiac University. After passing the bar, Rep. Fishbein joined his father's practice, Fishbein Law Firm LLC, and began practicing civil litigation in Connecticut's Supreme Court, federal courts, and state courts. In addition to his role in the state, Rep. Fishbein has served on the Wallingford Town Council since 2010.

State Senators with Longest Streak of "Above Expectations" (through the 2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	Name	Streak	SLES (2023-2024)	Seniority
1.	Martin Looney (D-11)	6 Legislative Sessions	3.61	16 Legislative Sessions
2.	Heather Bond Somers (R-18)	4 Legislative Sessions	1.32	4 Legislative Sessions

3.	**Saud Anwar (D-3)**	3 Legislative Sessions	3.68	3 Legislative Sessions
3.	**Robert Sampson (R-16)**	3 Legislative Sessions	2.11	3 Legislative Sessions
4.	**Mae Flexer (D-29)**	3 Legislative Sessions	1.81	5 Legislative Sessions

Senator Martin Looney (D) of District 11 (New Haven and Hamden) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 6 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 3.61 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he proposed 103 bills, 67 received action in committee, 54 received action beyond committee, 30 passed the Senate, and 17 became law. Sen. Looney has been on the top-10 most effective Democratic lawmaker list since the 2007-2008 legislative session.

Sen. Looney has been in the State Senate since 1992 and previously served 6 terms as a State Representative. He was the President Pro Tempore of the Senate in 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025. Before serving as President Pro Tempore, he was the Senate Majority Leader for 12 years. Sen. Looney holds an M.A. in English and a J.D. from the University of Connecticut. He is a partner in Keyes and Looney PLLC and practices general law. In addition, he is a practitioner-in-residence with the Criminal Justice Program at the University of New Haven and an adjunct faculty member in the Political Science Program at Quinnipiac University. He holds many accolades from his years in office, including an honorary degree from the University of New Haven and the Civil Justice Award from the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association.

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 freshman 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" (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	**Keith Denning (D-42)**	1.85
2.	**Christopher Poulos (D-81)**	1.80
3.	**Martin Foncello (R-107)**	1.45

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Democratic Representative Keith Denning (Wilton, New Canaan, and Ridgefield) with a score of 1.85.

During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Denning introduced 14 bills, 6 received action in committee, 5 received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 4 became law. Rep. Denning was the first elected Representative in the redrawn District-42. He did not seek reelection for the 2025-2026 term. Rep. Denning is a registered nurse anesthetist. During his career, he served as Chief Anesthetist at two hospitals in Ohio. In the community, Rep. Denning was involved with Operation Smile, a global nonprofit that provides free cleft palate repair surgeries to children worldwide.

Freshmen Senator "Above Expectations" (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	Name	SLES (2023-2024)
1.	Herron Gaston (D-23)	1.89

Senator Herron Gaston (D) of District 23 (Bridgeport and Stratford) was the freshman Senator with the highest "Above Expectations" SLES score for the 2023-2024 legislative session. He proposed 44 bills during the 2023-2024 legislative session, 33 received action in committee, 29 received action beyond committee, 16 passed the Senate, and 15 became law. Additionally, Sen. Gaston was ranked as the third most effective legislator in the 2023-2024 Connecticut General Assembly.

Sen. Gaston currently serves as the Deputy President Pro Tempore of the Senate. He holds a B.A. in political science and an M.P.A. from Florida A&M University. Additionally, Sen. Gaston holds a Master of Sacred Theology, a Master of Divinity, and a Doctorate from the Andover Newton Theological School at Yale Divinity School. He is currently the Senior Pastor at Summerfield United Methodist and the Vice President and Chief of Staff at the University of Bridgeport. He previously worked as the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Bridgeport. Sen. Gaston has a lengthy history in public service and politics, previously working as a Gubernatorial Fellow in the Florida Governor's office and as a congressional intern for the late Honorable John Lewis. In the community, Sen. Gaston serves as the chaplain for the Bridgeport Police Department and runs a faith-based nonprofit, Gaston Justice Coalition Group, LLC.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, the 2023-2024 term featured more even lawmaking activity and effectiveness across parties than we have seen in a number of years. This is reflected in both the SLES of Republicans and in the number of laws they produced. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the scores for minority-party members in Connecticut were above 0.8, reaching their highest levels since the power-sharing term in the Senate in 2017-2018.

In terms of laws produced, the average Republican in the House of Representatives in 2023-2024 sponsored 1.4 bills that became law, almost the same as the 1.5 law rate for the average Democrat. In the Senate, those rates were 4.6 laws per Republican compared to 5.2 laws per Democrat. Such activity and effectiveness across party lines is noteworthy, as many states have seen their minority-party lawmakers largely shut out of the legislative process.

Conclusion

The 2023-2024 Connecticut General Assembly legislative session 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 Connecticut.