



**Highlights from the 2023-2024 Idaho Legislature 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 2023-2024 Idaho Legislature 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-5 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top-3 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the Senate. Many lawmakers 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, 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 not a new phenomenon in Idaho. Across the 2023–2024 legislative term, majority-party Republicans consistently outperformed minority-party Democrats in State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and bill outcomes. These disparities highlight the institutional advantages of majority-party association.
- In the Senate, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. Six of the ten most effective lawmakers in the majority party in the Senate were committee chairs during the 2023-2024 Idaho legislative session.
- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one legislative session are likely to remain effective lawmakers across sessions, as several legislators appear among the top-10 and top-5 most effective lawmakers list 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 Idaho House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.33 compared to 1.15 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 0.89. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.56 in the minority party, 1.11 in the majority party, and 1.48 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 Idaho Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

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

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives. One of the top ten was a committee chair.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	James Petzke (District 21)	3.94	1
2.	Matthew Bundy (District 8A)	2.96	2
3.	Megan Blanksma (District 8B)	2.89	4
4.	Judy Boyle (District 9)	2.77	8
5.	Mike Moyle (District 10)	2.75	13
6.	Jordan Redman (District 3)	2.33	1
7.	Julianne Young (District 30)	2.33	3
8.	Clay Handy (District 27)	2.33	1
9.	Wendy Horman (District 32)	2.10	6

10.	Steve Miller (District 24)	2.04	4
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At the top of the list is Representative James Petzke from District 21 (Ada County) with a score of 3.94. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 39 bills, 31 received action beyond committee, 30 passed the House, and 26 became law. Rep. Petzke is an entrepreneur and small business owner. He began his career as a freelance web designer and online marketer. Later, he started his own company, Upland Optics, which sells high-quality sporting optics directly to hunters online. While running his companies, he earned an A.A. and a B.A. from Boise State University and a master’s degree from Harvard’s Extension School. Rep. Petzke is an avid outdoorsman and hunter with a deep connection to Idaho’s public lands.

Four Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Matthew Bundy (District 8A), Rep. Megan Blanksma (District 8B), Rep. Mike Moyle (District 10), and Rep. Wendy Horman (District 32).

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

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Colin Nash (District 16)	0.86	2
2.	Brooke Green (District 18)	0.79	3
3.	Ilana Rubel (District 18)	0.60	6
4.	Chris Mathias (District 19)	0.57	2
5.	Soñia Galaviz (District 16)	0.41	1

Topping our list is Representative Colin Nash of District 16 (Ada County), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 2.50. He introduced 7 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, all of which received action beyond committee, and 6 of which passed the House of Representatives and became law.

Rep. Nash assumed office in 2020 and served in the House until 2024. He received a bachelor’s degree from Weber State University and a J.D. from Concordia University School of Law. He currently works as an estate planning attorney. Rep. Nash was appointed and reelected to the Boise City Council in 2023. After his election, he stepped down from the Idaho House. In 2025, he sought and won reelection to the Boise City Council's District 2 seat.

Three Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Colin Nash (District 16), Rep. Brooke Green (District 18), and Rep. Ilana Rubel (District 18).

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

The following table identifies the ten highest scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 State Senate. Six of the top ten were committee chairs.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Scott Herndon (District 1)	2.68	None
2.	Van Burtenshaw (District 31)	2.65	Chair
3.	Kevin Cook (District 32)	2.62	Chair
4.	Julia VanOrden (District 30)	2.15	Chair
5.	Dave Lent (District 33)	1.89	Chair
6.	Abby Lee (District 9)	1.70	None
7.	Todd Lakey (District 23)	1.52	Chair
8.	Jim Guthrie (District 28)	1.48	Chair
9.	Mark Harris (District 35)	1.41	None
10.	Carl Bjerke (District 5)	1.39	None

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator Scott Herndon of District 1 (Bonner County), ranked first with a SLES score of 2.68. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 37 bills, 25 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, 21 passed the Senate, and 19 became law.

Sen. Herndon assumed office in 2022. He holds a B.S. from Arizona State University. He began his career in finance and computer programming, but later taught himself the art of custom homebuilding, a profession he has practiced for two decades. Before the Senate, Sen. Herndon served as the Chaplain for the Bonner County Jail and as Chairman of the Bonner County Republican Party.

Four legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Kevin Cook (District 32), Sen. Dave Lent (District 33), Sen. Todd Lakey (District 23), and Sen. Jim Guthrie (District 28).

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

The following table identifies the top-three highest scorers in the 2023-2024 State Senate among minority-party Democrats.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Janie Ward-Engelking (District 18)	1.29	6
2.	Rick Just (District 15)	1.07	1
3.	Melissa Wintrow (District 19)	0.82	2

Senator Janie Ward-Engelking from District 18 (Ada County) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 1.29. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 13 bills, all of which received action in committee, action beyond committee, passed the Senate, and became law.

Sen. Ward-Engelking has served in the Senate since 2014. Previously, she represented the 18th District in the Idaho State House. She holds a B.S. from Idaho State University and a master's degree from Boise State University. She was a classroom teacher for 33 years. In addition, she served as a curriculum writer and trainer for the College of Western Idaho. In the community, she was a member of the Boise Junior League and the community drug advisory committee, as well as a steering committee member for the public-school summit for parents, educators, and businesses (S.P.E.A.K). She has been recognized for her leadership with multiple Idaho Mother Achievement Awards.

Two Democratic State Senators appear on both top-3 lists for the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative sessions: Sen. Janie Ward-Engelking (District 18) and Sen. Melissa Wintrow (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.	Mike Moyle (R-10)	7 Legislative Sessions	2.75	13 Legislative Sessions
2.	Wendy Horman (R-32)	5 Legislative Sessions	2.10	6 Legislative Sessions
3.	Megan Blanksma (R-8)	3 Legislative Sessions	2.89	4 Legislative Sessions

Representative Mike Moyle (R) of District 10 (Canyon County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 7 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 2.75 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 26 bills, 18 of which received action beyond committee, 15 of which passed the House, and 13 of which became law. Rep. Moyle has consistently ranked among the top-10 most effective Republican lawmakers since 2010.

Rep. Moyle has served in the House since 1998. He was the Majority Leader from 2006-2022 and is the current Speaker of the House. Rep. Moyle is a lifelong Idahoan and attended Brigham Young University. Before joining the House, Rep. Moyle served on the USDA’s Far West Spearment Committee and as the fire commissioner of Star, Idaho. He is currently an Idaho-based farmer and rancher.

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. Freshman 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 Representatives “Above Expectations” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	James Petzke (R-21)	3.94
2.	Jordan Redman (R-3)	2.33
3.	Clay Handy (R-27)	2.33
4.	Soñia Galaviz (D-16)	0.41

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Republican Representative James Petzke (Ada County) with a score of 3.94. As noted above, Representative Petzke was also the highest-scoring lawmaker in the House during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Freshmen Senators “Above Expectations” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Scott Herndon (R-1)	2.68
2.	Carl Bjerke (R-5)	1.39
3.	Ben Adams (R-12)	1.28

4.	Rick Just (D-15)	1.07
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Senator Scott Herndon (R) of District 1 (Bonner County) was the freshman Senator with the highest "Above Expectations" SLES score for the 2023-2024 legislative session, and (as noted above) was also the most effective lawmaker in the Idaho Senate for the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Conclusion

The 2023-2024 Idaho Legislature 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 Idaho.