



Highlights from the 2023-2024 Vermont General Assembly State 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 Vermont 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-3 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 in comparison to minority-party Republican lawmakers.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 2023-2024 Vermont General Assembly, where many of the most effective majority-party lawmakers and the most effective House minority-party lawmaker 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-3 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 Vermont House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.69 compared to 1.11 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 2.92. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.30 in the minority party, 1.20 in the majority party, and 1.67 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 Vermont General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

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

The following table identifies the ten highest scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives. Five 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.	Amy Sheldon (Addison-1)	7.86	Chair
2.	Martin LaLonde (Chittenden-12)	6.07	Chair
3.	Emilie Kornheiser (Windham-7)	5.08	Chair
4.	Thomas Stevens (Washington-Chittenden)	4.97	Chair
5.	Karen Dolan (Chittenden-22)	4.67	None
6.	Katherine Donnally (Lamoille-2)	4.52	None
7.	Emily Mulvaney-Stanak (Chittenden-17)	4.40	None

8.	Lori Houghton (Chittenden-22)	4.03	Chair
9.	Alyssa Black (Chittenden-24)	3.80	None
10.	Jessica Brumsted (Chittenden-7)	3.55	None

At the top of the list is Representative Amy Sheldon from Addison-1 with a score of 7.86. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 11 bills, 5 of which passed the House of Representatives, and 4 became law.

Rep. Sheldon joined the House of Representatives in 2015. Before joining the House, she served on the Middlebury Planning Commission for 10 years and on the District 9 Environmental Board for Act 250. She also served as a board member of the Middlebury Area Land Trust. Rep. Sheldon holds a B.A. in economics from Middlebury College and an M.S in natural resource planning from the University of Vermont. She currently works as a Consulting Natural Resource Planner at Landslide Natural Resource Planning Inc. In addition, she is also a Senior Faculty Member at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) in Lander, Wyoming.

Rep. Sheldon also appeared among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 2023-2024 Vermont 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)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Michael Marcotte (Orleans-Lamoille)	9.50	10
2.	Anne Donahue (Washington-1)	2.61	11
3.	James Harrison (Rutland-11)	1.30	4
4.	Thomas Burditt (Rutland-2)	1.12	7
5.	William Canfield (Rutland-10)	1.08	10
6.	Scott Beck (Caledonia)	1.05	5
7.	Kenneth Goslant (Washington-1)	1.05	3
8.	Woodman Page (Orleans-2)	1.02	3
9.	Francis McFaun (Washington-Orange)	1.01	10
10.	Michael Morgan (Grand Isle-Chittenden)	1.01	2

Topping our list is Representative Michael Marcotte of Orleans-Lamoille with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 9.50. He introduced 17 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 9 of which passed the House, and 7 of which became law.

Rep. Marcotte has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2005. He is a lifelong resident of Vermont. Before joining the House, he was a Selectman for the Town of Coventry and the Chair of the Coventry Select Board. In addition, he is a long-time member of the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont and currently serves as the Chair. In the community, he is involved with the Newport Elks Lodge, the Gibbons Council of the Knights of Columbus, and the St. Mary of the Sea Parish Council.

Five legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring House Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Michael Marcotte (Orleans-Lamoille), Rep. Anne Donahue (Washington-1), Rep. James Harrison (Rutland-11), Rep. Thomas Burditt (Rutland-2), and Rep. Michael Morgan (Grand Isle-Chittenden).

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

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Richard “Dick” Sears (Bennington)	4.28	Chair
2.	Kesha Ram Hinsdale (Chittenden-Southeast)	3.37	Chair
3.	Virginia Lyons (Chittenden-Southeast)	3.33	Chair
4.	Christopher Bray (Addison)	3.07	Chair
5.	Ruth Hardy (Addison)	2.74	Chair
6.	Ann Cummings (Washington)	1.40	Chair
7.	Martine Gulick (Chittenden-Central)	1.37	None
8.	Alison Clarkson (Windsor)	1.25	Chair
9.	Nader Hashim (Windham)	1.21	None
10.	Tanya Vyhovsky (Chittenden-Central)	1.19	None

Among Democrats in the State Senate, Senator Richard “Dick” Sears from Bennington is first with a SLES score of 4.28. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 20 bills, 10 of which passed the Senate, and 7 became law.

Sen. Sears assumed office in 1993. Before joining the Senate, he served as a member and chairman of the Bennington Select Board from 1987 to 1993. Until retirement in 2006, he worked in residential programs for troubled youth. He holds a B.A. from the University of Vermont, Burlington. In the community, he was involved with Bennington Elks Lodge #567. Rep. Sears passed away in June 2024 and is remembered fondly by his colleagues for his dedication, optimism, and spirit.

Four legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Senate Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Richard “Dick” Sears (Bennington), Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale (Chittenden-Southeast), Sen. Virginia Lyons (Chittenden-Southeast), and Sen. Ann Cummings (Washington).

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

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Brian Collamore (Rutland)	0.69	5
2.	Randolph Brock (Franklin)	0.48	3
3.	Terry Williams (Rutland)	0.47	1

Senator Brian Collamore from Rutland had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 0.69. He introduced 6 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 1 of which passed the Senate and became law.

Sen. Collamore joined the Senate in 2015. He holds a B.A. in sociology/anthropology from Middlebury College. Sen. Collamore has had an extensive 45-year broadcasting career in Middlebury and Rutland. He is currently the General Sales Manager for five Catamount Radio stations. He holds a Distinguished Service Award from the Vermont Association of Broadcasters and is a member of the Association’s Hall of Fame. Outside of work, he is a long-time hockey official. He serves as the Vermont Supervisor of Officials for USA Hockey and as the President of the Vermont Chapter of the National Ice Hockey Association of America.

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.	Michael Marcotte (R-Orleans-Lamoille)	10 Legislative Sessions	9.50	10 Legislative Sessions
2.	Laura Sibia (I-Windham-2)	5 Legislative Sessions	3.43	5 Legislative Sessions
3.	Brian Cina (D-Chittenden-15)	4 Legislative Sessions	1.80	4 Legislative Sessions
4.	Kari Dolan (D-Washington-2)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.44	3 Legislative Sessions
5.	James Harrison (R-Rutland-11)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.30	4 Legislative Sessions

Representative Michael Marcotte (R) of Orleans-Lamoille had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 10 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 9.50 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Rep. Marcotte has consistently ranked among the top five most effective Republican lawmakers since 2013 and has held the topmost effective Republican lawmaker spot since 2017.

**State Senators 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.	Richard “Dick” Sears (D-Bennington)	11 Legislative Sessions	4.28	16 Legislative Sessions
2.	Virginia Lyons (D-Chittenden-Southeast)	6 Legislative Sessions	3.33	12 Legislative Sessions

The late Senator Richard “Dick” Sears (Bennington) had the longest streak of being "Above Expectations" with 11 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 4.28 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Sen. Sears was consistently among the top-10 most effective Democratic lawmakers in the Senate from 1994 to 2024. In addition, Sen. Sears was the most effective lawmaker in the Vermont Senate from 2003 to 2024.

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 Representative “Above Expectations” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Robin Chestnut-Tangerman (D-Rutland)	2.72
2.	Esme Cole (D-Windsor-6)	1.88
3.	Dennis LaBounty (D-Caledonia-3)	1.15
4.	Joseph Andriano (D-Addison)	1.12
4.	Mary-Katherine Stone (D-Chittenden-14)	1.12
6.	Gina Galfetti (R-Washington)	0.98
7.	Paul Clifford (R-Rutland-4)	0.91

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Democratic Representative Robin Chestnut-Tangerman (Rutland-Bennington) with a score of 2.72. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Chestnut-Tangerman introduced 9 bills, 2 of which passed the House, and 1 became law. Before rejoining the House in 2023, Rep. Chestnut-Tangerman served in the House from 2014-2021. His prior experience in the chamber likely gave him an advantage over other first-term lawmakers.

Rep. Chestnut-Tangerman is a former Middletown Springs Select Board member. While on the Select Board, he served on the Fire Department, Building, and Energy Committee and founded the town newsletter. Rep. Chestnut-Tangerman holds a B.A. from Hamilton College and completed graduate work in education at UMass Amherst and Castleton College. He owned and operated Talisman Woodwork for 25 years, specializing in energy-efficient remodeling and historical preservation. In addition, he was an adjunct faculty member in the Renewable Energy and Ecological Design Program (REED) at Green Mountain College. Today, he is a licensed realtor with McChesney Real Estate in Pawlet.

The State Representative with the second-highest "Above Expectations" during her freshman term was Democratic Representative Esme Cole (Windsor-6) with a score of 1.88. Rep. Cole has no prior legislative experience in the Vermont House. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Cole introduced 4 bills, 2 of which passed the House and became law. Rep. Cole holds a B.A. in international studies from Kenyon College and has received a graduate-level certificate in ecological economics from the University of Vermont. She has worked in a variety of nonprofit

organizations in Vermont, including the Child and Adult Food Access Program and Music to Life. Currently, she provides grant writing support with Creative Solutions for Nonprofits LLC.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Martine Gulick (D-Chittenden-Central)	1.37
2.	Nader Hashim (D-Windham)	1.21
3.	Tanya Vyhovsky (D-Chittenden-Central)	1.19
4.	Terry Williams (R-Rutland)	0.47
5.	Robert Norris (R-Franklin)	0.30

Senator Martine Gulick (D) of Chittenden-Central was the freshman Senator with the highest "Above Expectations" SLES score for the 2023-2024 legislative session. She proposed 13 bills during the 2023-2024 legislative session, 4 of which passed the Senate and became law. Additionally, Sen. Gulick was ranked as the seventh most effective legislator in the Vermont General Assembly for the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Sen. Gulick holds a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Vermont. She is a French and English teacher and has worked as a librarian in schools across Vermont and overseas. She spent 15 years of her career teaching at Essex High School and Essex Technical Center. Before joining the Senate, Sen. Gulick ran for a seat on the Burlington School Board. She is currently serving her fourth term as School Board Commissioner.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, the 2023-2024 term featured more of a partisan divide in the Senate than in prior terms. This is reflected in the SLES of the minority party (Republicans) averaging 0.30, the lowest level seen since the beginning of our data in 1993 (and half the SLES of minority parties across the country overall). That translates into just 3 laws arising from all Republican proposals in the Vermont Senate, compared to 50 from Democratic Senators.

Republicans did not fare too much better in the House of Representatives, where they combined to produce 18 laws (with 7 of them coming from the highly effective Rep. Marcotte). Indeed, across both chambers combined, Republicans sponsored 21 bills that became law compared to 145 from Democrats: roughly a 7:1 ratio in favor of Democrats.

Conclusion

The 2023-2024 Vermont 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 Vermont.