Highlights from the 56th Arizona 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 56th Arizona 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-10 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top-5 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 Arizona. Prior to the 2023-2024 legislative session, lawmakers from the majority party (Republicans) consistently received higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better outcomes in advancing their legislative agendas into law. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, Republicans continued to utilize their structural advantages to advance far more of their own bills than those of Democrats, in both the House and the Senate, despite a Democratic governor.
- In both the House and the Senate, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. Many of the most effective lawmakers in the majority party across both chambers were committee chairs during the 56th Arizona General Assembly 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 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 56th Arizona House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.23 compared to 1.89 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 2.58. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.23 in the minority party, 1.68 in the majority party, and 1.86 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 Arizona Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 56th Arizona House of Representatives

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

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

	Name	**LES**	**Committee Chair**
1.	**David Livingston (District 28)**	7.23	Chair
2.	**Gail Griffin (District 19)**	5.50	Chair
3.	**Selina Bliss (District 1)**	3.88	None
4.	**David Cook (District 7)**	3.57	Chair
5.	**Matt Gress (District 4)**	3.42	None
6.	**Kevin Payne (District 27)**	3.23	Chair
7.	**Tim Dunn (District 25)**	3.15	Chair
8.	**Leo Biasiucci (District 30)**	2.61	None

9.	**Steve Montenegro (District 29)**	2.15	Chair
10.	**Justin Wilmeth (District 2)**	2.00	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative David Livingston from District 28 (Maricopa County) with a score of 7.23. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 103 bills, 95 of which received action beyond committee, 62 passed the House, and 39 became law.

Rep. Livingston served in the House from 2013-2019, in the state Senate's 22nd District from 2019-2023, and reassumed his tenure in the Arizona House in 2023.

He holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Arizona State University. He built a career in business financial consulting with Ameriprise Inc. and eventually became a highly successful franchise owner. Rep. Livingston sold his Ameriprise Inc. franchise in 2013. He is a former member of the Peoria Chamber of Commerce and a past board member of the Glendale/Peoria YMCA. During his early time in the House, he served as the Republican Caucus's Majority Whip.

Three Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Gail Griffin (District 19), Rep. Kevin Payne (District 27), and Rep. Tim Dunn (District 25).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 56th Arizona House of Representatives

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

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

	Name	**LES**	**Seniority**
1.	**Amish Shah (District 5)**	0.80	3
2.	**Alma Hernandez (District 20)**	0.74	3
3.	**Jennifer Longdon (District 5)**	0.64	3
4.	**Consuelo Hernandez (District 21)**	0.56	1
5.	**Laura Terech (District 4)**	0.43	1
6.	**Anastasia Travers (District 12)**	0.42	1
7.	**Stephanie Stahl Hamilton (District 21)**	0.38	2
8.	**Analise Ortiz (District 24)**	0.35	1
9.	**Jennifer Pawlik (District 13)**	0.30	3
10.	**Andrés Cano (District 20)**	0.29	3

Topping our list is Representative Amish Shah of District 5 (Maricopa County) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 0.80. He introduced 33 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative

session, 8 of which received action beyond committee, 6 passed the House of Representatives, and 3 became law.

Rep. Shah assumed office in 2019. He received a B.A. in economics and an M.D. from Northwestern University. After medical school, Rep. Shah pursued his M.P.H from the University of California, Berkeley. He then started his residency in emergency medicine in New York City and began teaching other residents and medical students at New York's Mount Sinai Medical Center. While in New York, Rep. Shah assisted the New York Jets and the NFL in developing injury-preparedness and emergency management plans. He moved to Arizona to pursue a Sports Medicine Fellowship at Arizona State University. He now practices emergency medicine and sports medicine throughout Arizona. Outside of his practice, Rep. Shah is a founder of the Arizona Vegetarian Food Festival.

Three Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Amish Shah (District 5), Rep. Alma Hernandez (District 20), and Rep. Jennifer Longdon (District 5).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 56th Arizona State Senate

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

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

	Name	**LES**	**Committee Chair**
1.	**John Kavanagh (District 3)**	5.06	Chair
2.	**Thomas Shope (District 16)**	3.30	Chair
3.	**David Gowan (District 19)**	2.41	Chair
4.	**Janae Shamp (District 29)**	2.22	None
5.	**J.D. Mesnard (District 13)**	2.09	Chair
6.	**Justine Wadsack (District 17)**	2.03	None
7.	**Ken Bennett (District 1)**	1.85	Chair
7.	**Anthony Kern (District 27)**	1.77	Chair
9.	**Frank Carroll (District 28)**	1.49	None
10.	**Jake Hoffman (District 15)**	1.29	Chair

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator John Kavanagh of District 3 (Maricopa County) ranked first with a SLES score of 5.06. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 154 bills; 125 received action beyond committee, 95 passed the Senate, and 42 became law.

Sen. Kavanagh began his career in the state legislature in the Arizona House, representing Districts 8 and 23 from 2007 to 2015. In 2015, he assumed office in the state Senate and served as President pro tempore from 2018 to 2019. In 2019, he was reelected to represent Arizona's 23rd District in

the House and served until 2023. After his time in the House, he was reelected to the Senate and became the majority leader in 2025.

Sen. Kavanagh holds a B.A. from NYU, a master's degree in government from St. John's University, and a Ph.D. in criminal justice from Rutgers University. Before retiring and relocating to Arizona, he was a Detective Sergeant with the New York Port Authority and the New Jersey Police Department. He is currently a professor of criminal justice at Scottsdale Community College and serves as the Program Director of the Administration of Justice Studies and Forensic Science Program.

Three legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest-scoring Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Thomas Shope (District 16), Sen. David Gowan (District 19), and Sen. J.D. Mesnard (District 13).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 56th Arizona State Senate

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

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

	Name	**LES**	**Seniority**
1.	**Juan Mendez (District 8)**	0.55	4
2.	**Sally Ann Gonzales (District 20)**	0.46	3
3.	**Catherine Miranda (District 11)**	0.37	1
4.	**Theresa Hatathlie (District 6)**	0.32	2
5.	**Lela Alston (District 5)**	0.28	3

Senator Juan Mendez from District 8 (Maricopa County) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 0.55. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 105 bills; 5 of which received action beyond committee and 1 passed the Senate and became law.

Sen. Mendez has served in the Senate since 2017. Previously, he represented the 26th District in the Arizona State House from 2013-2017. He holds an A.D. from Phoenix College and a B.A. in political science from Arizona State University. Sen. Mendez began his public service career by serving on the City of Phoenix Human Services Advisory Committee. Afterwards, he served on the Tempe Community Council, focusing on improving services in the area. He is very involved in the Arizona Democratic Party. Locally, he has served as a Precinct and State Committee Member, President of the ASU Young Democrats, and in various roles at the district level. Outside of the legislature, Sen. Mendez is a substitute teacher at Tempe and Mesa public high schools.

Two Democratic State Senators appear on both the top-3 list for the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative sessions: Sen. Juan Mendez (District 8) and Sen. Sally Ann Gonzales (District 20).

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.	**Gail Griffin (R-19)**	3 Legislative Sessions	5.50	3 Legislative Sessions
2.	**Amish Shah (D-5)**	3 Legislative Sessions	0.80	3 Legislative Sessions

Representative Gail Griffin (R) of District 19 (Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pima counties) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 3 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 5.50 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. In the 2023-2024 session, she introduced 81 bills, 74 of which received action beyond committee, 63 passed the House, and 22 became law. Rep. Griffin has consistently ranked among the top ten most effective Republican lawmakers since 2019.

Rep. Griffin began her career in the state legislature in 1997. From 1997-2001, she represented Arizona's 8th District in the State House. In 2011, she was elected to represent the Arizona Senate and served until 2019. In 2019, Rep. Griffin was reelected to the Arizona House of Representatives.

Rep. Griffin is a Real Estate Broker with Vista Realty. In the community, she is affiliated with the Arizona Farm Bureau, Arizona Cattle Growers Association, the Natural Resource Conservation District, the Sierra Vista Elks Lodge, and the Arizona/New Mexico Coalition of Counties. Before joining the state legislature, she served on the Water Banking Authority Board and with the Water Protection Fund. She has been recognized for her leadership through awards such as "Legislator of the Year" from the Arizona Rural Health Association and the Arizona Mining Association.

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

	Name	**Streak**	**SLES (2023-2024)**	**Seniority**
1.	**Juan Mendez (D-8)**	4 Legislative Sessions	0.55	4 Legislative Sessions

Senator Juan Mendez (D) of District 8 (Maricopa County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 0.55 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Rep. Mendez has consistently ranked among the top three most effective Democratic lawmakers since 2017.

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)

	__Name__	__SLES (2023-2024)__
1.	**David Livingston (R-28)**	7.23
2.	**Selina Bliss (R-1)**	3.88
3.	**Matt Gress (R-4)**	3.42
4.	**Consuelo Hernandez (D-21)**	0.56
5.	**Laura Terech (D-4)**	0.43
6.	**Anastasia Travers (D-12)**	0.42
7.	**Analise Ortiz (D-24)**	0.35

The State Representative with the highest "Above Expectations" score during his freshman term was Republican Representative David Livingston (Maricopa County) with a score of 7.23. He also emerged as the highest-scoring lawmaker during the 2023-2024 legislative session. Rep. Livingston previously served in the Arizona House from 2013-2019 and in the Arizona Senate from 2019 to 2023. His prior experience likely gave him some institutional advantages over other first-term Representatives during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

The State Representative with the second-highest freshman "Above Expectations" score was Republican Representative Selina Bliss (Maricopa County) with a score of 3.88. Rep. Bliss has no prior legislative experience in the Arizona House. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 72 bills, 49 of which received action beyond committee, 42 passed the House, and 15 became law. She also emerged as the third-highest-scoring lawmaker during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Rep. Bliss holds a B.S. and a master's in nursing from Arizona State University and a Ph.D. in nursing education from Capella University. She began her career as a staff nurse for Yavapai Regional Medical Center and as an Academic Nurse Educator at Yavapai College. She is currently an expert witness in healthcare court cases. Rep. Bliss has been involved with many community organizations, including the Yavapai County Republican Party, the Yavapai County Industrial Development Authority, and the Yavapai County Education Fund.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	**John Kavanagh (R-3)**	5.06
2.	**Janae Shamp (R-29)**	2.22
3.	**Justine Wadsack (R-17)**	2.03
4.	**Catherine Miranda (D-11)**	0.37

Senator John Kavanagh (R) of District 3 (Maricopa County) was the freshman Senator with the highest "Above Expectations" SLES score for the 2023-2024 legislative session. Additionally, Sen. Kavanagh was named the most effective legislator in the Arizona Senate for the 2023-2024 legislative session. Sen. Kavanagh (as noted above) previously served in the Arizona House from 2007-2015, in the Arizona Senate from 2015-2019, and again in the Arizona House from 2019-2023. His prior experience in the chamber likely gave him advantages over other first-term Senators in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Senator Janae Shamp (R) of District 29 (Maricopa County) was the freshman Senator with the second-highest "Above Expectations" SLES score for the 2023-2024 legislative session. Sen. Shamp had no prior legislative experience in the Arizona Senate. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 66 bills, 58 of which received action beyond committee, 53 of which passed the Senate, and 16 of which became law. Additionally, Sen. Shamp was named the fourth-most effective lawmaker in the Arizona Senate during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Sen. Shamp is a registered nurse. She holds a B.S. in molecular bioscience and biotechnology from Arizona State University and a B.S. in nursing from Grand Canyon University. From January 2025 to June 2025, Sen. Shamp served as the Senate's majority leader.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, partisanship continues to be strongly associated with lawmaking in Arizona. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the scores for minority-party members in both chambers in Arizona average much lower—around 0.23.

While Democrats are disadvantaged at lawmaking, they have not been completely shut out of the legislative process, although nearly so. For example, in the 2023-2024 term, Democratic legislators introduced 20 bills that became law. In contrast, the number of laws sponsored by Republicans in

that term totaled 442. This approximately 20:1 ratio is significantly out of proportion to the number of seats the parties hold in the chambers, which have been nearly equal, and well beyond what is seen in most legislatures across the country.

Conclusion

The 56th Arizona 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 Arizona.