



Highlights from the 74th Colorado General Assembly Legislative Effectiveness Scores

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3/10/2026

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 74th Colorado General Assembly legislative session. This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective majority party lawmakers and the top-5 most effective minority party lawmakers in both chambers, including many legislators who continued their patterns of highly effective lawmaking from the previous legislative sessions.
- We identify the lawmaker with the longest streak 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 Colorado. Prior to the 2023-2024 legislative session, lawmakers from the majority party, either Republican or Democratic, consistently had higher State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and achieved better outcomes in advancing their legislative agenda into law. Despite minority-party members making strong inroads (especially in the Senate) during the 2023-2024 legislative session, their average scores are comparatively lower, due to the structural barriers they face in trying to implement their legislative agenda.
- However, unlike in some highly partisan states, minority-party members remained active in the lawmaking process through the 2023-2024 term. In the House and the Senate, we see that almost all members of the Colorado General Assembly were successful lawmakers, advancing at least one of their proposals through to law.
- Across both chambers, serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. Four out of the top-10 most effective majority party lawmakers in both chambers were committee chairs during the 74th Colorado General Assembly.

- In addition, our findings indicate that effective lawmakers in one legislative session are likely to remain effective lawmakers in other sessions, as several legislators appear among the top-10 or 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 Colorado House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.66 compared to 1.13 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.25. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.62 in the minority party, 1.21 in the majority party, and 1.35 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 Colorado General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 74th Colorado House of Representatives

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 House of Representatives. Four 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.	Shannon Bird (District 29)	9.62	None
2.	Judith Amabile (District 49)	3.64	Chair
3.	Jennifer Bacon (District 7)	2.38	None
4.	Lorena Garcia (District 35)	2.07	None
5.	Monica Duran (District 23)	2.03	None
6.	Junie Joseph (District 10)	1.99	None

7.	Andrew Boesenecker (District 53)	1.91	None
8.	Lindsey Daugherty (District 24)	1.81	Chair
9.	Emily Sirota (District 9)	1.65	Chair
10.	Marc Snyder (District 18)	1.61	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Shannon Bird from District 29 (Adams and Jefferson counties) with a score of 9.62. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 106 bills, 100 of which received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 99 of which became law. Rep. Bird has served in the Colorado House of Representatives since 2019 and is a former Westminster City Councilwoman. She holds a B.A. in economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder, an M.S. and M.B.A from the University of Colorado at Denver, and a J.D. from the University of Denver. Formerly, she was employed in the private sector, practicing law in public and commercial finance with a focus on large-scale community infrastructure projects. In 2025, Rep. Bird announced her bid to run for Colorado's 8th Congressional District against incumbent Rep. Gabe Evans (R), and she resigned from her position in the State House in early 2026 to focus on her campaign for Congress.

Three Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Shannon Bird (District 29), Rep. Judith Amabile (District 49), and Rep. Jennifer Bacon (District 7).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 74th Colorado 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.	Ryan Armagost (District 64)	1.56	1
2.	Marc Catlin (District 58)	1.38	4
3.	Lisa Frizell (District 45)	1.32	1
4.	Matt Soper (District 54)	1.13	3
5.	Mary Bradfield (District 21)	1.11	2

Topping our list is Representative Ryan Armagost of District 64 (Larimer and Weld counties) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.56. He introduced 17 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 14 of which received action beyond committee, passed the House of Representatives, and became law.

Two Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Representative Marc Catlin (District 58) and Representative Mary Bradfield (District 21).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 74th Colorado State Senate

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Jeff Bridges (District 26)	3.01	Chair
2.	Lisa Cutter (District 20)	2.38	None
3.	Steve Fenberg (District 18)	2.05	None
4.	Rachel Zenzinger (District 19)	2.00	None
5.	Dylan Roberts (District 8)	1.85	Chair
6.	Rhonda Fields (District 28)	1.78	Chair
7.	Nick Hinrichsen (District 3)	1.73	None
8.	James Coleman (District 33)	1.17	Chair
9.	Joann Ginal (District 14)	1.14	None
10.	Janice Marchman (District 15)	1.11	None

Among Democrats in the Senate, Senator Jeff Bridges from District 26 (Arapahoe, Denver, and Jefferson counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 3.01. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 43 bills, 42 of which received action in committee, 40 received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 39 of which became law. Before joining the Senate in 2019, Bridges represented Colorado's 3rd District in the State House of Representatives. Sen. Bridges, a lifelong Coloradoan, holds a B.A. in political science from Kenyon College and a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School. In 2025, Sen. Bridges announced his candidacy for Colorado State Treasurer.

Four legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Jeff Bridges (District 26), Sen. Steve Fenberg (District 18), Sen. Rhonda Fields (District 28), and Sen. Joann Ginal (District 14).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 74th Colorado State Senate

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Barbara Kirkmeyer (District 23)	2.87	2
2.	Bob Gardner (District 12)	1.48	4
3.	Mark Baisley (District 4)	1.07	1

4.	Paul Lundeen (District 9)	0.60	3
5.	Janice Rich (District 7)	0.39	1

Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer from District 23 (Larimer and Weld counties) had the highest SLES for Senate Republicans in the 2023-2024 legislative session, with a score of 2.87. She introduced 45 bills, 41 of which received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 38 of which became law.

Sen. Kirkmeyer, a 4th-generation Coloradoan, holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Colorado and a state teaching certificate. Formerly, Sen. Kirkmeyer co-owned and operated a dairy farm. Before serving in the Senate, Sen. Kirkmeyer was a Weld County Commissioner from 1993 to 2001 and from 2008 to 2020. In 2001, Sen. Kirkmeyer stepped away from her work on the County Commission to serve as Acting Executive Director of Local Affairs (DOLA) under Governor Bill Owens. Sen. Kirkmeyer has also been recognized for her work in local politics through accolades such as ‘Commissioner of the Year.’ In late 2025, Kirkmeyer announced her candidacy for Colorado Governor.

Two Republican Senators appear on both the top-5 list for the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative session: Sen. Barbara Kirkmeyer (District 23) and Sen. Bob Gardner (District 12).

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. Below we identify the legislator with the longest active streak of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2023-2024 legislative session.

**State Senator 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.	Bob Gardner (R-12)	4 Legislative Sessions	1.48	4 Legislative Sessions

Senator Bob Gardner (R) of District 12 (El Paso and Teller counties) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 4 legislative sessions, and a SLES score of 1.48 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Sen. Gardner consistently ranked in the top 2 of Senate Republicans since joining the Senate in 2017. During the 2023-2024 Colorado Senate legislative session, he proposed 26 bills, 26 received action in committee, 20 received action beyond committee, 19 passed the Senate, and 17 became law.

Before joining the Senate, Sen. Gardner served as the District 21 Representative in the Colorado House of Representatives from 2006 to 2012. Outside of public office, Sen. Gardner is a United

States Air Force veteran. He holds a J.D. from the University of Texas and an L.L.M. from the George Washington University Law School. After earning his J.D., Sen. Gardner served in the Judge Advocate General Corps and then transitioned to private practice, specializing in government contract law. Most recently, in 2024, Sen. Gardner ran for Colorado's 5th Congressional District.

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.	Lorena Garcia (D-35)	2.07
2.	Junie Joseph (D-10)	1.99
3.	Meghan Lukens (D-26)	1.59
4.	Ryan Armagost (R-64)	1.56
5.	Kyle Brown (D-12)	1.54
6.	Lisa Frizell (R-45)	1.32
7.	Brandi Bradley (R-39)	0.94

The State Representative with the highest SLES score that was "Above Expectations" during her freshman term was Representative Lorena Garcia (Adams and Jefferson counties) with a score of 2.07. She also earned the fourth highest SLES score for Democratic Representatives during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Rep. Garcia introduced 23 bills, 17 of which received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 15 of which became law during the 2023-2024 legislative session. In 2023, Rep. Garcia was appointed to the State House by the Colorado Democratic Party following Rep. Benavidez's resignation. Before public office, Rep. Garcia worked for various non-profits across Colorado. During the 2020 election cycle, Rep. Garcia ran in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate but failed to make the ballot.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Lisa Cutter (D-20)	2.38
2.	Dylan Roberts (D-8)	1.85
3.	Mark Baisley (R-4)	1.06

Senator Lisa Cutter (D) of District 20 (Jefferson County) was the freshman Senator with the highest SLES score that was "Above Expectations" for the 2023-2024 legislative session. Additionally, Sen. Cutter was named the second-most effective lawmaker among Democratic Senators in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

She introduced 33 bills during the 2023-2024 legislative session, 29 of which received action beyond committee and passed the Senate, and 26 of which became law. Before joining the Senate, Sen. Cutter represented Colorado's 25th district in the Colorado House of Representatives from 2019 to 2023. She holds a B.S. in marketing from Metropolitan State University of Denver and has owned her own public relations firm, Cutter Communications, since 1998. In her personal life, she is involved in various community and non-profit organizations, many of which focus on women's issues.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, the Colorado General Assembly continues to seek a balance in lawmaking between members of the majority and minority party. With large Democratic majorities, proposals from Republicans are naturally more difficult to advance. However, unlike in some highly partisan states, minority-party members remained active in the lawmaking process through the 2023-2024 term. In the House, the average Republican sponsored about 5 bills that became law, relative to 10 laws produced on average by Democratic sponsors. In the Senate, those rates were about 7 laws from the average Republican and 14 among Democrats.

Put another way, almost all members of the Colorado General Assembly were successful lawmakers, advancing at least one of their proposals through to law. This was true even of minority-party Republicans, with 15 of the 19 Republican Representatives producing at least one law, and all but one of the Republican Senators doing so. Consistent with legislative ideals that no political party has a monopoly on good public policy proposals, such patterns offer evidence of a well-functioning legislature.

Conclusion

The 2023-2024 Colorado 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 Colorado.