



Highlights from the 102nd Missouri General Assembly 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 102nd Missouri General Assembly legislative session (2023-2024). This report offers highlights from our initial analyses of these scores, including:

- We identify the top-10 most effective lawmakers 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 legislators 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 Missouri. Across the 2023–2024 legislative term and in earlier sessions, majority-party Republicans consistently outperformed minority-party Democrats in State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and bill outcomes. Even though Democrats held nearly one-third of the seats in each chamber during the 2023-2024 legislative session, their bill passage rate compared to Republicans is relatively low, at 1:20. This gap highlights the institutional advantages of majority-party association in Missouri.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 102nd Missouri General Assembly legislative session, where many of the most effective lawmakers across the majority party held committee chair positions.
- 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 lists of most effective lawmakers 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 102nd Missouri House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.30 compared to 1.33 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 2.47. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.57 in the minority party, 1.18 in the majority party, and 1.15 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 Missouri General Assembly together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 102nd Missouri House of Representatives

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Committee Chair</u>
1.	Cody Smith (District 163)	26.37	Chair
2.	Phil Christofanelli (District 104)	4.80	Chair
3.	Dave Griffith (District 60)	4.14	Chair
4.	Mike Haffner (District 55)	3.60	Chair
5.	Brenda Shields (District 11)	3.21	Chair

6.	Mike McGirl (District 118)	2.75	Chair
7.	Ben Keathley (District 101)	2.67	None
8.	Jim Murphy (District 94)	2.64	Chair
9.	Terry Thompson (District 53)	2.53	Chair
10.	Mike Henderson (District 117)	2.51	None

At the top of the list is Representative Cody Smith from District 163 (Jasper County) with a score of 26.37. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 46 bills, 42 of which received action in committee and action beyond committee, and 38 of which passed the House and became law.

Rep. Smith assumed office in 2016 and served until 2025. He is a native of Carthage and studied business at Missouri Southern State University. Before joining the House, he served on the Carthage Planning and Zoning Variance Committee. Rep. Smith has worked as a real estate agent and owns his own sanitization company. Today, he serves as the senior director of government affairs and strategic initiatives for Compass Academy Network. In 2024, Rep. Smith ran for Missouri Treasurer. In the community, Rep. Smith serves as an appointed member of the Children’s Trust Fund Board, a nonprofit organization that specializes in child abuse prevention.

Three Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Cody Smith (District 163), Rep. Phil Christofanelli (District 104), and Rep. Brenda Shields (District 11).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 102nd Missouri 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)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Ian Mackey (District 99)	0.64	3
2.	Ashley Bland Manlove (District 26)	0.61	3
3.	LaKeySha Bosley (District 79)	0.61	3
4.	Gretchen Bangert (District 70)	0.58	4
5.	Patty Lewis (District 25)	0.57	2
6.	Marlon Anderson (District 76)	0.56	2
7.	Robert Sauls (District 21)	0.55	3
8.	Mark Sharp (District 37)	0.55	3
9.	Maggie Nurrenbern (District 15)	0.51	2

10.	Jo Doll (District 91)	0.50	2
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Topping our list is Representative Ian Mackey of District 99 (St. Louis County), with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 0.64. He introduced 49 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, 2 of which received action in committee and 1 received action beyond committee.

Rep. Mackey was elected to the Missouri House in 2018. He holds a B.A. in early childhood education from Westminster College and a J.D. from Suffolk University Law School. Rep. Mackey is a former educator and currently works as an attorney. In the community, Rep. Mackey serves on the vestry of the Church of St. Michael and St. George and volunteers with Planned Parenthood, the NAACP, and the Hadley County Democrats.

Four Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top 10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Ian Mackey (District 99), Rep. Ashley Bland Manlove (District 26), Rep. Lakeysha Bosley (District 79), and Rep. Mark Sharp (District 37).

Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 102nd Missouri 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.	Curtis Trent (District 20)	2.32	None
2.	Justin Brown (District 16)	2.10	Chair
3.	Holly Thompson Rehder (District 27)	1.91	Chair
4.	Tony Luetkemeyer (District 34)	1.85	Chair
5.	Sandy Crawford (District 28)	1.85	Chair
6.	Rusty Black (District 12)	1.78	None
7.	Karla Eslinger (District 33)	1.59	Chair
8.	Mike Bernskoetter (District 6)	1.27	Chair
9.	Nick Schroer (District 2)	1.21	None
10.	Ben Brown (District 26)	1.19	None

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator Curtis Trent of District 20 (Barton, Dade, Greene, and Webster counties) ranked first with a SLES score of 2.32. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 86 bills, 42 of which received action in committee, 16 received action beyond committee, 6 passed the Senate, and 3 became law.

Sen. Trent joined the Senate in 2023 and previously represented Missouri’s 133rd district in the State House from 2017-2023. Sen. Trent graduated with a degree in political science from Missouri State University and holds a J.D. from Saint Louis University School of Law. He is an attorney and practices administrative law. In the community, Sen. Trent is an active member of the Church of Christ and the Sons of the American Revolution.

Five legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest scoring Republicans in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Justin Brown (District 16), Sen. Holly Thompson Rehder (District 27), Sen. Tony Luetkemeyer (District 34), Sen. Sandy Crawford (District 28), and Sen. Mike Bernskoetter (District 6).

Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 102nd Missouri State Senate

The following table identifies the five highest-scoring Democrats in the 2023-2024 State Senate.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
1.	Lauren Arthur (District 17)	0.91	3
2.	Karla May (District 4)	0.86	3
3.	Greg Razer (District 7)	0.82	2
4.	Steven Roberts (District 5)	0.71	2
5.	Angel Mosley (District 13)	0.64	2

Senator Lauren Arthur (Clay County) had the highest SLES for Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 0.91. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 56 bills, 14 of which received action in committee, 6 received action beyond committee, 2 passed the Senate, and 1 became law.

Sen. Arthur assumed office in the Senate in 2018. Before joining the Senate, she represented Missouri’s 18th district in the State House. Sen. Arthur left office in 2024. She attended Smith College and graduated with a degree in history. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she joined Teach for America in Kansas City. She later received her master’s degree in education at the University of Missouri. She has worked in advertising and professional development services and is currently on the governing board of University Health, a medical facility in the Kansas City community.

Three legislators on the list were among the top five highest-scoring Democrats in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Lauren Arthur (District 17), Sen. Karla May (District 4), and Steven Roberts (District 5).

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.	Phil Christofanelli (R-104)	4 Legislative Sessions	4.80	4 Legislative Sessions
2.	Cody Smith (R-163)	3 Legislative Sessions	26.37	4 Legislative Sessions
3.	Jeff Knight (R-142)	3 Legislative Sessions	1.41	4 Legislative Sessions
4.	LaKeySha Bosley (D-79)	3 Legislative Sessions	0.61	3 Legislative Sessions

Representative Phil Christofanelli (R) of District 104 (St. Charles County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations," with 4 legislative sessions and a SLES score of 4.80 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 35 bills, 28 of which received action in committee, 18 received action beyond committee, 6 passed the House, and 2 became law. Rep. Christofanelli (as noted above) was also the second highest-scoring House Republican in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Rep. Christofanelli was elected to the House in 2017 and, at the time, was the youngest serving member of the legislature. He holds a B.A. and J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. In his career, he has worked as a legislative correspondent and press secretary for Congressman Dan Benishek. He currently works as an attorney in private practice. After being term-limited in the House, Rep. Christofanelli ran for the Missouri State Senate.

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.	Ben Keathley (R-101)	2.67
2.	Brad Christ (R-96)	1.55

Rep. Ben Keathley (St. Louis County) was the State Representative with the top SLES score, who was "Above Expectations" in lawmaking effectiveness during his freshman term, with a score of 2.67. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Keathley introduced 28 bills, 17 of which received action in committee, 11 received action beyond committee, 3 passed the House, and 1 became law. Rep. Keathley was the seventh highest-ranking Republican Representative during the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Before joining the House, Rep. Keathley was a member of the Chesterfield City Council and served as chairman of the Public Health and Safety Committee. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Knox College and a master's and J.D. from Syracuse University. In 2015, he opened his own law practice in Chesterfield, specializing in contracts and family law.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	Curtis Trent (R-20)	2.32
2.	Rusty Black (R-12)	1.78

Sen. Curtis Trent (Barton, Dade, Greene, and Webster counties) was the State Senator with the top SLES score, who was "Above Expectations" in lawmaking effectiveness, during his freshman term, with a score of 2.32. Sen. Trent (as noted above) was the top scoring Republican Senator in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

Other Findings

In terms of broader patterns, although there is a majority-party advantage in most states, this advantage is strongly revealed in Missouri. While the SLES of minority-party lawmakers across the country on the whole averages about 0.6, the average scores for minority-party Democrats in Missouri are a bit lower than that in the Senate at 0.57 and substantially lower in the House of Representatives at a value of 0.30.

These differences translate into a wide gap in the number of laws produced by Democrats relative to Republicans. Of the 100 laws produced in the 2023-2024 term, only 5 of them were sponsored by Democrats – all from the Senate. In the House, no Democratic bill became law in 2023-2024. This shutting out of the minority party is not new. Only two bills sponsored by the Democrats in the House became law in 2021-2022 and they were shut out once again back in 2019-2020.

Given that Democrats held about a third of the seats in each chamber, this nearly 20:1 ratio in laws coming from Republicans to those coming from Democrats is significantly out of proportion with the relative seat-shares, and beyond what is seen in most states across the country.

Conclusion

The 102nd Missouri General Assembly 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 Missouri.