



## **Highlights from the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah Legislature 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 65<sup>th</sup> Utah Legislature 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 5 most effective minority-party lawmakers in the House of Representatives, and the top 3 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 Utah. Across the 2023–2024 legislative term, majority-party Republicans consistently outperformed minority-party Democrats in State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) and bill outcomes. Of the 1090 laws enacted during the 2023-2024 legislative session, 981 were proposed by Republicans, demonstrating Republicans' strong control in the Utah Legislature.
- Serving as a committee chair is related to greater lawmaking effectiveness. This phenomenon is highlighted during the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah Legislature 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. While the scores capture how successful an individual member of the Utah House or Senate is at advancing her sponsored bills, compared to all of members of her chamber (in a legislative term), it's important to be cognizant of the fact that the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores do not capture lawmaking activities that occur behind the scenes, such as legislators advocating for the passage of bills that they haven't sponsored. The scores also don't capture how effective individual members of the House or Senate are at blocking the advancement of other legislators' sponsored bills. To the extent that we are interested in identifying who is most successful at advancing their sponsored legislation through the different stages of the lawmaking process (and why), however, the State Legislative Effectiveness Scores provide us with an objective indicator of legislators' efforts. 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 65<sup>th</sup> Utah House of Representatives, minority-party lawmakers had an average SLES of 0.65 compared to 1.08 for majority-party members, while committee chairs had an average SLES of 1.72. In the State Senate, those averages were 0.84 in the minority party, 1.04 in the majority party, and 1.11 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 Utah Legislature together would be inappropriate, but these comparisons within each party are quite informative.

### **Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah House of Representatives**

The following table identifies the ten highest-scoring Republicans in the 2023-2024 Utah House of Representatives. Five 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>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Ryan Wilcox (District 7)</b>	3.26	Chair
<b>2.</b>	<b>Jordan Teuscher (District 44)</b>	2.73	Chair
<b>3.</b>	<b>Steve Eliason (District 43)</b>	2.53	Chair
<b>4.</b>	<b>Kera Birkeland (District 4)</b>	2.34	None
<b>5.</b>	<b>Casey Snider (District 5)</b>	2.08	None
<b>6.</b>	<b>Carl Albrecht (District 70)</b>	1.97	Chair
<b>7.</b>	<b>Karianne Lisonbee (District 14)</b>	1.86	None
<b>8.</b>	<b>Stephanie Gricius (District 50)</b>	1.69	None
<b>9.</b>	<b>Marsha Judkins (District 61)</b>	1.68	None
<b>10.</b>	<b>Cory Maloy (District 52)</b>	1.62	Chair

At the top of the list is Representative Ryan Wilcox from District 7 (Weber County) with a score of 3.26. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, he introduced 39 bills: 38 received action beyond committee, 34 passed the House, and 32 became law.

Rep. Wilcox first assumed office in 2009 and served until 2014; he was reelected to the House in 2021. Rep. Wilcox holds a bachelor’s degree from Weber State University. He has experience working in business management for Sprint Nextel Corporation and is also the former Northern Utah Director and Senior Policy Advisor to U.S. Senator Mike Lee. In the community, Rep. Wilcox is affiliated with the Ogden School Foundation, Follow the Flag North Ogden, and the Scouts.

Four Republican Representatives on our current list were also among the top-10 highest scorers in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Jordan Teuscher (District 44), Rep. Steve Eliason (District 43), Rep. Karianne Lisonbee (District 14), and Rep. Marsha Judkins (District 61).

### Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah House of Representatives

The following table identifies the top five highest scorers in the 2023-2024 Utah 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>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Andrew Stoddard (District 40)</b>	1.87	3
<b>2.</b>	<b>Doug Owens (District 33)</b>	1.19	2
<b>3.</b>	<b>Jennifer Dailey-Provost (District 22)</b>	1.00	3

<b>4.</b>	<b>Ashlee Matthews (District 37)</b>	0.82	2
<b>5.</b>	<b>Angela Romero (District 25)</b>	0.68	6

Topping our list is Representative Andrew Stoddard of District 40 (Salt Lake County) with a State Legislative Effectiveness Score of 1.87. He introduced 36 bills in the 2023-2024 legislative session, of which 25 received action beyond committee, 19 passed the House, and 13 became law.

Rep. Stoddard assumed office in 2019. Before joining the House, Rep. Stoddard served as the Chair of the Midvale Community Council. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Utah and a J.D. from Brigham Young University. Now working as a personal injury attorney at Craig Swapp & Associates. Rep. Stoddard formerly worked as a Murray County City Prosecutor for almost a decade and for the Utah Crime Victims Legal Clinic.

Three Democratic Representatives on our current list were also among the top-5 highest scorers among Democratic Representatives in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Rep. Andrew Stoddard (District 40), Rep. Jennifer Dailey-Provost (District 22), and Rep. Angela Romero (District 25).

### **Highly Effective Republican Lawmakers in the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah State Senate**

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

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

	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>LES</u></b>	<b><u>Committee Chair</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Wayne Harper (District 16)</b>	3.13	Chair
<b>2.</b>	<b>Todd Weiler (District 8)</b>	2.35	Chair
<b>3.</b>	<b>Curtis Bramble (District 24)</b>	2.34	Chair
<b>4.</b>	<b>Lincoln Fillmore (District 17)</b>	1.90	None
<b>5.</b>	<b>Mike McKell (District 25)</b>	1.80	None
<b>6.</b>	<b>Kirk Cullimore (District 19)</b>	1.33	None
<b>7.</b>	<b>Daniel McCay (District 18)</b>	1.26	Chair
<b>8.</b>	<b>Scott Sandall (District 1)</b>	1.26	None
<b>9.</b>	<b>Chris Wilson (District 2)</b>	1.09	None
<b>10.</b>	<b>Evan Vickers (District 28)</b>	1.07	None

Among Republicans in the Senate, Senator Wayne Harper of District 16 (Salt Lake County) ranked first with a SLES of 3.13. In the 2023-2024 session, he introduced 56 bills; 54 received action beyond committee; 51 passed the Senate; and 50 became law.

Sen. Harper assumed office in the Senate in 2013. Before joining the Senate, he represented Utah’s 43rd District in the State House from 1997-2012. Sen. Harper began his political career as a West Jordan City Councilman. He has also served as the President of the Streamline Sales Tax Governing Board, the Utah State Historical Records Advisory Board, and the Utah Alliance for Economic Development. Sen. Harper holds a B.A. and M.S. in history from Brigham Young University. He works as a Business and Economic Development Consultant for Taylorsville City. Sen. Harper currently serves as the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and as the President of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Seven legislators on the list were among the top-10 highest-scoring Republican Senators in the 2021-2022 legislative session: Sen. Wayne Harper (District 16), Sen. Todd Weiler (District 8), Sen. Curtis Bramble (District 24), Sen. Lincoln Fillmore (District 17), Sen. Mike McKell (District 25), Sen. Kirk Cullimore (District 19), and Sen. Daniel McCay (District 18).

**Highly Effective Democratic Lawmakers in the 65<sup>th</sup> Utah Senate**

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

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>LES</u>	<u>Seniority</u>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Stephanie Pitcher (District 14)</b>	1.26	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>Jen Plumb (District 9)</b>	1.10	1
<b>3.</b>	<b>Luz Escamilla (District 10)</b>	0.85	8

Senator Stephanie Pitcher (Salt Lake County) had the highest SLES among Senate Democrats in the 2023-2024 legislative session with a score of 1.26. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, she introduced 26 bills, 25 of which received action beyond committee, 19 of which passed the Senate, and 18 of which became law.

Sen. Pitcher assumed office in the Senate in 2023. Before joining the Senate, she represented the 40th District in the Utah House from 2019 to 2022. Sen. Pitcher holds a B.A. from Utah State University, an M.P.A from the University of Utah, and a J.D. from S.J. Quinney College of Law. She previously worked as a Deputy District Attorney with the Davis County District Attorney’s Office and is now a criminal defense attorney. In the community, she has been involved with Comunidades Unidas and the ACLU of Utah.

Sen. Luz Escamilla (District 10) was the only Democratic Senator to rank among the top-3 in lawmaking effectiveness during both the 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 legislative sessions.

### 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. We identify the Representatives and Senators with the longest active streak of exceeding expectations in consecutive sessions continuing through (and including) the 2023-2024 legislative session below.

#### 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.	<b>Andrew Stoddard (D-40)</b>	3 Legislative Sessions	1.87	3 Legislative Sessions
2.	<b>Jennifer Dailey-Provost (D-22)</b>	3 Legislative Sessions	1.00	3 Legislative Sessions

Representative Andrew Stoddard (D) of District 40 (Salt Lake County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 3 legislative sessions and a SLES of 1.87 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. Rep. Stoddard (as noted above) was the highest-scoring House Democratic Representative in the 2023-2024 session. He has also been ranked among the top-3 highest-scoring Democratic Representatives in the Utah House since 2019.

#### 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.	<b>Wayne Harper (R-16)</b>	6 Legislative Sessions	3.13	6 Legislative Sessions
2.	<b>Todd Weiler (R-8)</b>	6 Legislative Sessions	2.35	7 Legislative Sessions

Senator Wayne Harper (R) of District 16 (Salt Lake County) had the longest streak of "Above Expectations" with 6 legislative sessions and a score of 3.13 in the 2023-2024 legislative session. During the 2023-2024 legislative session (as noted above), Sen. Harper was the top-scoring Republican Senator. In addition, Sen. Harper has consistently ranked among the top-5 most effective Republican lawmakers in the Senate since 2013.

## 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.

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	<b>Stephanie Gricius (R-50)</b>	1.69

Representative Stephanie Gricius (Utah County) was the Representative who had the highest SLES and ranked “Above Expectations” during her freshman term with a score of 1.69. During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Rep. Gricius introduced 22 bills, 21 received action beyond committee and passed the House, and 18 became law. Rep. Gricius currently serves as the House Majority Caucus Manager.

Before joining the House, Rep. Gricius served on the Eagle Mountain City Council from 2015-2020. While on the city council, she focused on bringing workforce and economic development opportunities to Eagle Mountain. In the community, Rep. Gricius has served as a precinct chair for the Utah County Republican Party and was elected as the Legislative District Chair for Utah House District 2. She previously owned and operated a small business, focusing on custom manufacturing equipment and processes. Now, she works closely with local non-profits focusing on children in foster care and women recovering from domestic violence.

### Freshman Senator “Above Expectations” (2023-2024 Legislative Session)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>SLES (2023-2024)</u>
1.	<b>Stephanie Pitcher (D-14)</b>	1.26

Senator Stephanie Pitcher (Salt Lake County) had the highest SLES in the Senate, who was also “Above Expectations” in lawmaking effectiveness during her freshman term, with a score of 1.26. During the 2023-2024 legislative session (as noted above), Rep. Pitcher was the highest-scoring Democratic Senator in the Utah Senate.

### **Other Findings**

In terms of broader patterns, Republicans maintained strong control of the Utah State Legislature in 2023-24, with Democrats holding only 14 of the 75 seats in the House and 6 of the 29 in the Senate. Lacking natural coalition partners on many of their proposals, Democrats in Utah had a difficult time advancing their legislation but still outperformed many minority-party members across the country. Nationwide, minority-party lawmakers scored an average SLES of around 0.6, compared to 0.65 in the Utah House and a rather robust 0.84 in the Utah Senate.

Such findings suggest that Democrats, while small in number, still advanced a sizable number of proposals that gained enough support to become law. 57 bills proposed by Democrats in the House and 52 from Democratic Senators became law. However, the sheer number of Republicans and the success of their proposals meant that 981 of the 1,090 laws produced in Utah in 2023-24 were sponsored by Republicans.

### **Conclusion**

The 65<sup>th</sup> Utah 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 Utah.