

A Legislatively Bipartisan General Assembly?

ABOUT US

Fair Districts PA is a fiscal project of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and a nonpartisan, volunteer grassroots movement. We are working to fix legislative rules, create fair districts and map out a fair redistricting process that will help re-establish an accountable government that represents the people of Pennsylvania — not partisan politicians or outside interests.

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The LWVPA does not support or oppose any political party or candidate but does take — and always has taken — stands on issues its members have studied. Through a rigorous study and consensus-taking process that is initiated by the LWVPA's grassroots membership, the LWVPA takes positions on governmental, social and environmental issues.

FAIR DISTRICTS PA

<https://www.fairdistrictspa.com/>

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<https://www.fixharrisburg.com/>

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*The examples provided in this document are for illustrative purposes.
Fair Districts PA does not take a position on any bills unrelated to redistricting reform.
The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania's policy priorities can be found on its website.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the 12-month period between January and December 2023, with a primary focus on tracking the progress of bipartisan bills through the Pennsylvania Legislature. Prior reports have produced strong anecdotal evidence suggesting that rank-and-file legislators have little agency in determining which bills come up for a vote. This report analyzes what happens to bills that have bipartisan sponsors, a bipartisan committee vote, and a bipartisan final floor vote (final passage) for each committee in the House and Senate.

For the purposes of this report, a bipartisan bill is defined as one that meets the following stringent criteria at that particular time in the process:

- At the time of introduction, at least 25% of the bill's sponsors are members of each party.
- At committee vote, at least 25% of the votes in favor of the bill are from members of each party.
- At the final floor vote, at least 25% of the votes in favor of the bill are from members of each party.

In order to focus on bills that are unquestionably bipartisan, this definition excludes many initiatives that may have significant support across party lines but that are not consistent with the above criteria. It is not a perfect definition and it misses many bipartisan efforts. Nor is the definition endorsed by FDPA for general use. However, through this strict approach, it is possible to examine data on committee activity and related decision-making in a more objective way. Bills called bipartisan that meet these criteria are unquestionably bipartisan.

In this report, legislation is categorized at three stages in the legislative process in order to identify changes in a bill's status as it gains or loses support in committee and on the chamber floor. For example, a bill that is introduced without bipartisan sponsorship may become bipartisan if it receives a bipartisan committee vote; and a bill that receives a bipartisan vote in committee may, especially if amended, lose bipartisan status if it does not get a bipartisan

final floor vote. By capturing changes of this kind, this data presentation provides more detail than other readily accessible information published to date. The report summarizes data for the general assembly as a whole, as well as for each of the two chambers.

Key findings for the General Assembly as a whole:

- **Status at Introduction:** Nearly 2,800 bills were introduced in 2023 and 16% met this report's bipartisan definition when they were introduced.
- **Advancement to First Consideration:** Of those 400+ bills introduced that met this report's definition of bipartisan sponsorship, 35% advanced to first consideration.
- **Reporting from Committees:** Many bills that were introduced without meeting this report's definition of bipartisan sponsorship got bipartisan votes in committee. Regardless of sponsorship, 70% of the nearly 600 bills reported from committees received a bipartisan committee vote. And of those, 65% had received final floor votes by December 31.
- **Final Floor Vote:** Nearly 300 bills passed their first chamber with a bipartisan vote according to this report's definition. Of those, less than 40% had received a committee vote in their second chamber and less than 25% received a final vote in their second chamber.

UNANIMOUS BILLS:

Nearly 160 bills passed their first chamber with a unanimous vote. Of those, **less than 50%** had received a committee vote in their second chamber and less than 30% had received a final floor vote in the second chamber by December 31.

Committees vary widely in the number of bills referred to them, the number of times that they meet and the percentage of bipartisan bills that they consider and vote upon. A detailed examination of each committee's work is presented in Tables 1 and 2 on pages 12-15.

As in the first year of the two preceding legislative sessions, a very small percentage of all introduced bills reached final approval in both chambers. While not all legislative progress occurs during session days, session days are critical for bills to progress.

In conclusion, the following principles recommended by Fair Districts PA are reaffirmed as the basis for a more effective, responsive legislative process:

- Bills with demonstrated bipartisan support must be guaranteed a vote in committee.
- Bills voted out of committee with bipartisan support must be guaranteed a final floor vote on the chamber floor.
- Bills passed in one chamber with bipartisan support should be given consideration in the other chamber.

The Conclusions section of this report provides a link to a simple form and an invitation for feedback.

Previous reports (*Dysfunction by Design*¹ and *Off to a Slow Start*²) tracked 10 bipartisan bills and solutions that did not receive final floor votes in both chambers in previous sessions. Although some of these bills have progressed during 2023, none have yet received final floor votes in both chambers.

INTRODUCTION

A core assumption of representative government is that elected officials will vote on policies that enjoy broad bipartisan support.

Since the 1980s, legislation to reform Pennsylvania's redistricting processes has enjoyed support from organizations like the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and Common Cause PA, but has never received a vote. Fair Districts PA was launched in 2016 by those and other organizations to advocate for redistricting reform legislation introduced by legislators in both chambers and both parties.

In 2018, Senate Bill 22, introduced by Senators Lisa Boscola (D) and Mario Scavello (R), was amended and passed unanimously out of the Senate State Government Committee. On the Senate floor, it was further amended in a way that destroyed bipartisan support. After passing the Senate, the bill was then buried under more than 600 amendments in the House.

That same year, House Bill 722, introduced by Representatives Steve Samuelson (D) and Eric Roe (R), gained 110 sponsors, yet was gutted beyond recognition in the House State Government Committee and was never given a final floor vote.

For many citizens new to the ways of the PA legislature, those bills served as a call to action. Although the Pennsylvania Constitution promises "the people" the right to alter and reform our government, it is hard to see how that right can be realized when legislative maneuvers appear to block all avenues toward reform.

Since 2018, Fair Districts PA has launched a Fix Harrisburg campaign, created a Fix Harrisburg website and gathered a growing list of stories of legislative dysfunction, reflecting the frustrated efforts of other Pennsylvania advocacy groups. This experience provides ample evidence that too many bills of importance to Pennsylvania voters go nowhere, despite huge citizen investment in education and advocacy. Many good solutions, introduced by thoughtful legislators from both parties, are buried in unrelated amendments or

blocked by invisible influences not aligned with the best interests of Pennsylvania voters.

This report builds on two earlier reports in an effort to understand how the rules in the Pennsylvania General Assembly affect the ability of rank-and-file legislators to have agency in deciding which bills come up for a vote. As a result of the rules currently in effect, voters are denied important information about the degree to which their legislators can serve them.

All of our reports provide evidence of the need for a legislative process that is consistent with the following three standards supported by FDPA as the basis for an effective legislative policy:

- Bills with demonstrated bipartisan support must be guaranteed a vote in committee.
- Bills voted out of committee with bipartisan support must be guaranteed a final vote on the chamber floor.
- Bills passed in one chamber with bipartisan support should be given consideration in the other chamber.

2023 brought changes.

For the first time in over a decade, different parties held majorities in the two chambers, with a Republican majority in the Senate and a Democratic majority in the House.

Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward (R) acknowledged the challenges associated with the newly divided legislature. In a December 2023 statement to Spotlight PA, Senator Ward noted, "*We're not going to get any kind of ideological issues through the legislature... We need to work together to find consensus on middle-of-the-road legislation that helps the commonwealth.*"³

In recognition of these challenges, this report defines and then tracks what it defines as bipartisan bills during 2023. Strictly for the purposes of this report, a bill is regarded as bipartisan if at one of three stages of the legislative process – introduction, committee vote and final floor vote – at least 25% of its supporters come from members of each party.

This definition of “bipartisan” is not perfect nor is it endorsed for general use by Fair Districts PA. Many bills with strong bipartisan public support lack bipartisan sponsorship or bipartisan votes under this definition. Despite these limitations, this definition provides standards that allow an objective look at data on committee activity and related decision-making that is more detailed than other readily accessible information published to date. This strict definition also ensures that bipartisan bills reported here are unquestionably bipartisan, even though it may miss others with less objectively quantifiable support.

In sum, this report analyzes what happens to bills that have bipartisan sponsors, what happens to bills that have a bipartisan committee vote and what happens to bills that receive a bipartisan final floor vote (final passage). It examines the activity and provides related statistics for each committee in the House and the Senate. It also reports on session days as session days are required for floor-related actions.

Our goal is to prompt dialogue and to encourage greater collaboration and more effective legislative action on behalf of the people of Pennsylvania. As this session is only half over, we hope that the data and observations can serve as conversation starters and as an information resource. We also hope that members of the General Assembly and Pennsylvanians advocating for change will consider the legislative process and ways to improve it to more effectively address the critical challenges we face today.

We appreciate your interest and welcome feedback.

Volunteer Research Team, Fair Districts PA

“We’re not going to get any kind of ideological issues through the legislature... We need to work together to find consensus on middle-of-the-road legislation that helps the commonwealth.”³
- Senator Kim Ward

BILLS PASSED IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS OF THREE LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

A total of 2,781 bills were introduced in the General Assembly during 2023, compared with 2,992 and 3,040 bills introduced in the first years of the preceding two sessions.

Legislative performance in 2023 was comparable to previous years in another respect: in each of these years, only a very small number of bills moved through the legislative process to final passage and transmission to the Governor. In 2023, a total of 77 bills – 3% of the bills introduced that year – reached final approval, compared with 137 bills in 2019 (5% of bills introduced) and 120 bills in 2021 (4%).

In 2023 there were 48 session days for the House and 57 session days for the Senate. While not all legislative progress occurs during session days, session days are critical for considering and advancing bills.

- Actions take place to advance bills through the legislative process only during session days (receiving from committee, 1st consideration, tabling and un-tabling, addressing amendments, 2nd consideration, referring to Appropriations for fiscal notes, receiving from Appropriations, 3rd consideration, final passage, concurrence.)
- Most committee voting meetings to consider bills occur on session days in both chambers.
- On session days, legislators are together in the Capitol and have the opportunity to meet face to face and discuss policy and bills outside of formal meetings and procedures.

Not all session days are the same. Some session days have actions on more bills than other days.

Excluding “remarks” and bill referrals to committees which can occur during non-session days:

- On an average session day in 2023, the House took action on 23 bills. On the busiest day, the House took action on 62 bills.
- On an average session day in 2023, the Senate took action on 19 bills. On the busiest day, the Senate took action on 53 bills.
- On an average session day in 2021, the House took action on 30 bills. On the busiest day, the House took action on 72 bills.
- On an average session day in 2021, the Senate took action on 23 bills. On the busiest day, the Senate took action on 79 bills.

Both chambers have announced their schedules for 2024. The House has scheduled 34 session days. In 2022, 32 session days were scheduled. The Senate has scheduled 28 session days. In 2022, 31 session days were scheduled.

During 2023, some signs of cooperation between the two chambers of the General Assembly were noteworthy. For example, seven bills authored by minority-party House Republicans and three bills authored by minority-party Senate Democrats were enacted. In contrast, during the entire 2021-22 legislative session, when Republicans held majorities in both chambers, the General Assembly enacted only one House bill and two Senate bills authored by minority-party Democrats.

While there has been comment in the press that PA was the only divided government in 2023, in reality Virginia was also divided, as was noted in our earlier report. At the start of Virginia’s 2023 session on January 11, Republicans held a 52-48 majority in the House, while Democrats held a 21-19 majority in the Senate.

Despite opposing leadership in the two chambers, the Virginia General Assembly passed 822 bills before they adjourned on February 25, at the end of their 45-day session, as compared to the 77 bills enacted by the Pennsylvania General Assembly during the first 12 months of their two-year session.

DEFINING “BIPARTISAN” FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT

Since 2018, Fair Districts PA has been asking for reforms to the legislative rules to guarantee bipartisan bills a vote in committee, on the floor and in both chambers. These reforms would provide rank-and-file legislators with a meaningful role in helping to decide what bills come up for a vote. In turn, voters would have more information about the positions of their representatives. As part of our effort, a Fix Harrisburg website was launched, two previous reports were published and a group of volunteer researchers assembled multiple “stories of dysfunction” that catalog what has happened to legislative solutions that have had bipartisan support of Pennsylvania voters, commissions and elected bodies.

This experience provided evidence that demonstrably strong bipartisan support from the general public does not always translate into bipartisan support from legislators. With an awareness of this contradiction, the FDPA research team decided to explore what happens to bills that have demonstrably bipartisan support within the legislature itself. Accordingly, this publication reports on bills that advance through the legislative process with significant support from members of both parties.

For the purposes of this report, “bipartisanship” is defined through the use of stringent, quantitative criteria applied to sponsorship, committee votes and final floor votes. This definition is not the only way that “bipartisan” may be defined or characterized; many bills with strong bipartisan public support do not meet the criteria associated with this definition. In addition, this definition is not endorsed for general use by FDPA.

Despite these limitations, the definition used in this report provides standards that allow an objective look at data on committee activity and related decision-making that is more detailed than other readily accessible information published to date. This strict definition also ensures that bipartisan bills reported here are unquestionably bipartisan, even though it may miss others with less objectively quantifiable

support. The exclusion of bills that do not meet these criteria does not necessarily mean that these bills should not be considered bipartisan—just that they could not be included in this report.

Since support for a bill may change during the legislative process, the characterization of a bill as “bipartisan” is made at three different stages of the process. In this report, a bill is characterized as bipartisan when:

- At introduction, at least 25% of total sponsors are members of each party.
- At committee vote, at least 25% of committee members from each party vote in favor of the bill.
- At the final floor vote, at least 25% of the votes in favor of the bill are from members of each party.

ONE CAVEAT: Sponsorship is an imperfect measure of actual bipartisan support among legislators.

Sponsorship is not a commitment to vote for a bill, and some supporters of a bill may choose not to sponsor.

However, before a publicly recorded vote takes place, sponsorship does serve as an expression of support for introducing a bill, and it can provide an indication as to whether legislators of both parties support the bill.

Once committee votes take place and are recorded, voting behavior is used to define whether a bill is bipartisan.

PROGRESS OF BIPARTISAN BILLS (AS DEFINED FOR THIS REPORT) THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

In this section, we detail how defined bipartisan bills progressed through the legislative process as of December 31, 2023. This section includes bills that were introduced in January 2023, as well as others that were not introduced until December 2023. Because this session is only half over, many bills may progress in the coming months.

How many bills with bipartisan sponsorships were introduced and referred to committees?

- > **House:** 201 bills with bipartisan sponsorships were introduced and referred to committees. This amount represents 11% of all 1,869 bills that were referred to committees.
- > **Senate:** 233 bills with bipartisan sponsorships were introduced and referred to committees. This amount represents 26% of all 912 bills that were referred to committees.

How many bills with bipartisan sponsorships received a vote in the committees?

- > **House:** 45 of the 201 bills with bipartisan sponsorships (22%) received a committee vote.
- > **Senate:** 105 of the 233 bills with bipartisan sponsorships (45%) received a committee vote.

How many bills received bipartisan votes in committee?

Many bills without bipartisan sponsors do receive bipartisan support in committee votes.

- > **House:** 229 out of 347 bills received bipartisan committee votes. This amount represents 66% of all House bills that received a House committee vote.
- > **Senate:** 208 out of 251 bills received bipartisan committee votes. This amount represents 83% of all Senate bills that received a Senate committee vote.

How many bills that were reported out with bipartisan committee votes proceeded to a final floor vote in that chamber?

- > **House:** 155 of the 229 bills that received a bipartisan committee vote received a final floor vote (68%).
- > **Senate:** 128 of the 208 bills that received a bipartisan committee vote received a final floor vote (62%).

How many bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the chamber were considered and reported out in the second chamber's committees?

- > **House:** 52 of the 151 bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the House were considered and reported out from a Senate committee (34%).
- > **Senate:** 55 of the 127 bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the Senate were considered and reported out from a House committee (43%).

How many bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the first chamber received a final floor vote in the second chamber?

- > **House:** 37 of the 151 bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the House were given a final Senate floor vote (25%).
- > **Senate:** 32 of the 127 bills that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the Senate were given a final House floor vote (25%).

UNANIMOUS VOTES—WHAT HAPPENED TO BILLS THAT RECEIVED UNANIMOUS VOTES (FIGURE 1)?

Regardless of how one defines bipartisanship, a unanimous vote is the strongest indicator of bipartisanship.

House: 189 House bills received unanimous votes in committee. 128 (68%) received final floor votes in the House.

- > 66 House bills had unanimous final floor votes.
- > 31 (47%) received Senate committee votes.
- > 22 (33%) received Senate final floor votes.

Senate: 170 Senate bills received unanimous votes in committee. 109 (64%) received final floor votes in the Senate.

- > 93 Senate bills had unanimous final floor votes.
- > 43 (46%) received House committee votes.
- > 24 (25%) received House final floor votes.

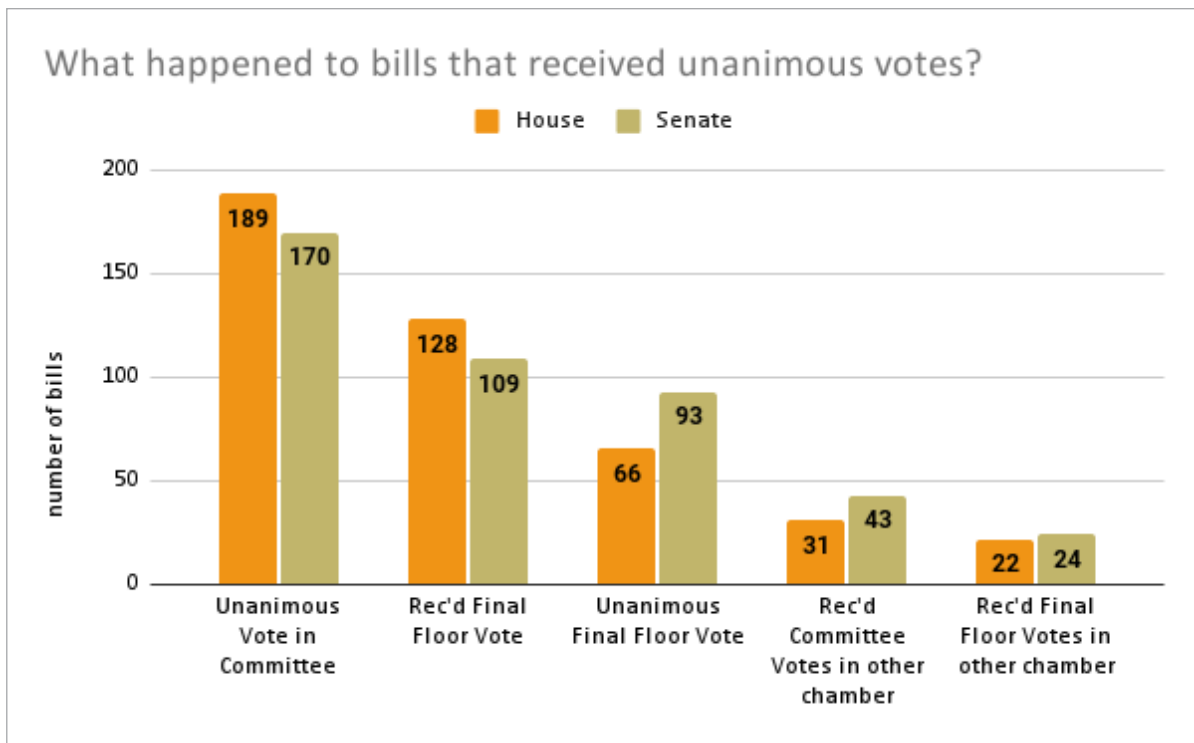


Fig.1

A DETAILED LOOK AT COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

Before any bipartisan bill can be considered in the chamber, it must be considered and voted on in committee. For this reason, the prioritization of these bills and the scheduling of committee meetings are critical. Tables 1 and 2 provide a look at what happened to bipartisan bills in the committees in both chambers during 2023. This data does not include Appropriations and Rules Committees or their associated bills.

Data on committee activity is presented in the four categories described below, along with a summary of those activities within all committees.

BILLS VOTED OUT WITH A BIPARTISAN VOTE:

For each committee, the total number of bills originating in their chamber and subsequently voted out of committee is listed along with the number and percentage of bills that were voted out with a bipartisan vote. The committees in each chamber are listed in rank order (most to least) by the total number of bills that have been referred.

- > **House:** In total, committees voted out 329 House bills; 232 (71%) with bipartisan votes.
- > **Senate:** In total, committees voted out 240 Senate bill; 199 (83%) with bipartisan votes.

BILLS WITH BIPARTISAN SPONSORSHIP:

The total number of bills with bipartisan sponsorship originating in their chamber and referred to each committee are followed by the number of these bills remaining in committee and the number voted out of committee with the corresponding percentage of bills voted out.

- > **House:** In total, committees received 201 House bills with bipartisan sponsorships; 45 (22%) were voted out to the House for first consideration.
- > **Senate:** In total, committees received 233 Senate bills with bipartisan sponsorships; 105 (45%) were voted out to the Senate for first consideration.

BILLS FROM THE OTHER CHAMBER THAT RECEIVED A BIPARTISAN FLOOR VOTE:

The total number of bills referred to each committee that received a bipartisan final floor vote in the other chamber and referred to these committees, followed by the number remaining in committee and the number and percentage of these bills that were voted out of committee.

- > **House:** In total, committees received 118 Senate bills with bipartisan Senate final floor votes; 54 (46%) were voted out of committee to the House for first consideration.
- > **Senate:** In total, committees received 145 House bills with bipartisan House final floor votes; 48 (33%) were voted out of committee to the Senate for first consideration.

TOTAL BILLS AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

The total number of all House and Senate bills referred to each committee in the 12 months of 2023; number of bills voted out of committee to their chamber; number of voting meetings that occurred in 2023; and number of informational sessions and/or hearings held by that committee during 2023.

- > **House:** On average, committees met 7 times during 2023, ranging from 0 to 20 for individual committees.
- > **Senate:** On average, committees met 6 times during 2023, ranging from 3 to 12 for individual committees.

To illustrate how this data is organized in Tables 1 and 2, the first row of Table 1 provides data on actions by the House Judiciary Committee.

As indicated in the data in the orange columns in Table 1, that committee had the highest number of House bills referred to it: 294 bills, of which 56 were considered and voted out to the House for first consideration, 17 of the 56 (30%) with bipartisan committee votes.

As shown in the data in the green columns, the Judiciary Committee had 19 House bills referred to the committee with bipartisan sponsorships: 3 of the 19 (16%) were considered and voted out to the House for first consideration.

As shown in the purple columns, the Judiciary committee received 17 Senate bills that had bipartisan Senate final floor votes: 10 of the 17 (59%) were considered and voted out to the House for first consideration.

As shown in the blue columns, the House Judiciary Committee received a total of 314 House and Senate bills. During their 20 scheduled voting meetings for 2023, 68 bills were considered and voted out to the House for first consideration. The schedule for the committee also included five additional meetings for public hearings and informational meetings.

This analysis focuses on the performance of House and Senate General Bills as listed in the committee's webpages. Therefore, the lists of House and Senate Committees in Tables 1 and 2, respectively, do not include their Appropriations and Rules Committees. It should also be noted that, in contrast to the rest of this report, the summary above and all data in Tables 1 and 2 does not include Appropriations Bills or bills that are introduced and referred directly to the Rules Committee.

Table 1: House Committee Activity, 2023 (Ranked by Highest Number of Bills Referred)

HOUSE COMMITTEE	House Bills Voted Out				House Bills - Bipartisan Sponsorship			
	Total Referred to Cmte	Voted Out to the House Flr	Receiving Bipartisan Vote	% Receiving Bipartisan Vote	Total	Remain in Cmte	Voted Out	% Voted Out
Judiciary	294	56	17	30%	19	16	3	16%
Education	197	27	17	63%	12	11	1	8%
State Government	181	29	18	62%	15	12	3	20%
Finance	145	15	10	67%	19	18	1	5%
Transportation	125	23	22	96%	26	21	5	19%
Labor & Industry	113	17	5	29%	9	7	2	22%
Health	109	18	15	83%	10	9	1	10%
Local Government	79	27	24	89%	26	15	11	42%
Consumer Protection, Tech, etc.	68	9	9	100%	9	8	1	11%
Environmental Resources & Energy	67	6	5	83%	2	1	1	50%
Housing & Community Dev.	61	12	10	83%	3	2	1	33%
Human Services	59	10	8	80%	4	3	1	25%
Vet Affairs & Emergency Prep	58	18	17	94%	12	6	6	50%
Agriculture & Rural Affairs	44	13	12	92%	4	2	2	50%
Professional Licensure	43	8	8	100%	11	9	2	18%
Commerce	43	11	8	73%	5	4	1	20%
Insurance	36	3	3	100%	4	4	0	0%
Children & Youth	28	8	6	75%	1	1	0	0%
Liquor Control	27	8	8	100%	3	1	2	67%
Game & Fisheries	25	6	5	83%	4	3	1	25%
Gaming Oversight	11	0	0	n/a	1	1	0	0%
Tourism & Econ & Rec Dev.	11	1	1	100%	2	2	0	0%
Aging & Older Adult Services	7	4	4	100%	0	-	-	n/a
Totals or % for 23 committees	1,831	329	232	71%	201	156	45	22%

Table 1 (continued)

Senate Bills - Bipartisan Final Senate Floor Vote				Total Bills and Committee Meetings				HOUSE COMMITTEE
Total	Remain in Cmte	Voted Out	% Voted Out	Referred to Cmte	Voted Out to the House Floor	Voting Meetings for Bills*	Hearing or Info. Meetings	
17	7	10	59%	314	68	20	5	Judiciary
10	7	3	30%	210	30	10	17	Education
9	5	4	44%	193	33	8	1	State Government
5	3	2	40%	152	17	7	8	Finance
21	13	8	38%	150	31	13	4	Transportation
4	2	2	50%	118	19	11	2	Labor & Industry
7	2	5	71%	116	23	9	7	Health
12	9	3	25%	91	30	5	4	Local Government
2	1	1	50%	70	10	5	14	Consumer Protection, Tech, etc.
2	2	0	0%	74	6	7	9	Environmental Resources & Energy
3	1	2	67%	64	14	5	7	Housing & Community Dev.
3	2	1	33%	65	11	9	2	Human Services
8	4	4	50%	68	22	13	10	Vet Affairs & Emergency Prep
5	1	4	80%	49	17	7	7	Agriculture & Rural Affairs
2	1	1	50%	45	9	4	4	Professional Licensure
1	1	0	0%	44	11	4	1	Commerce
2	1	1	50%	38	4	2	1	Insurance
0	-	-	n/a	28	8	8	4	Children & Youth
0	-	-	n/a	27	8	4	1	Liquor Control
4	1	3	75%	29	9	4	3	Game & Fisheries
0	-	-	n/a	11	0	0	0	Gaming Oversight
0	-	-	n/a	11	1	3	1	Tourism & Econ & Rec Dev.
2	1	1	50%	9	5	3	4	Aging & Older Adult Services
119	64	55	46%	1,976	386	161	116	Totals or % for 23 committees

Source: PA General Assembly, Bills and Amendments, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/bills/>

*Does not include meetings which only considered nominations

Table 2: Senate Committee Activity, 2023 (Ranked by Highest Number of Bills Referred)

SENATE COMMITTEE	Senate Bills Voted Out				Senate Bills - Bipartisan Sponsored			
	Total Referred to Cmte	Voted Out to Senate Flr	Receiving Bipartisan Vote	% Receiving Bipartisan Vote	Total	Remain in Cmte	Voted Out	% Voted Out
Judiciary	139	21	18	86%	22	12	10	45%
State Government	96	21	18	86%	19	11	8	42%
Education	81	20	13	65%	20	12	8	40%
Finance	74	10	8	80%	23	21	2	9%
Health & Human Services	72	21	17	81%	22	11	11	50%
Transportation	59	36	33	92%	20	8	12	60%
Labor & Industry	52	6	5	83%	9	7	2	22%
Consumer Protect & Prof Licensure	43	8	8	100%	21	15	6	29%
Environmental Resources & Energy	42	14	4	29%	3	2	1	33%
Banking & Insurance	32	4	4	100%	7	4	3	43%
Law & Justice	29	14	12	86%	9	4	5	56%
Vet Affairs & Emergency Prep	28	15	13	87%	13	6	7	54%
Local Government	26	16	16	100%	16	2	14	88%
Community, Econ & Rec Dev	26	6	6	100%	9	5	4	44%
Agriculture & Rural Affairs	23	5	5	100%	3	1	2	67%
Urban Affairs & Housing	22	7	7	100%	6	1	5	83%
Game & Fisheries	11	4	4	100%	6	4	2	33%
Intergovernmental Operations	11	4	0	0%	0	0	0	n/a
Aging & Youth	10	4	4	100%	2	1	1	50%
Communications & Technology	8	4	4	100%	3	1	2	67%
Totals or % for 20 committees	884	240	199	83%	233	128	105	45%

Table 2: (continued)

House Bills - Bipartisan Final House Floor Vote				Total Bills and Committee Meetings				SENATE COMMITTEE
Total	Remain in Cmte	Voted Out	% Voted Out	Referred to Cmte	Voted Out to Senate Floor	Voting Meetings for Bills*	Hearing or Info Meetings	
14	10	4	29%	162	27	10	2	Judiciary
12	10	2	17%	90	23	11	2	State Government
14	8	6	43%	101	26	12	9	Education
5	3	2	40%	83	12	5	0	Finance
14	10	4	29%	88	25	9	2	Health & Human Services
15	10	5	33%	76	41	11	4	Transportation
2	1	1	50%	60	7	4	0	Labor & Industry
12	11	1	8%	57	9	3	5	Consumer Protect & Prof Licensure
3	2	1	33%	46	15	8	2	Environmental Resources & Energy
5	3	2	40%	36	6	4	0	Banking & Insurance
8	4	4	50%	39	19	7	0	Law & Justice
8	4	4	50%	38	20	10	6	Vet Affairs & Emergency Prep
6	3	3	50%	35	19	5	0	Local Government
2	2	0	0%	28	6	3	2	Community, Econ & Rec Dev
9	4	5	56%	33	11	4	2	Agriculture & Rural Affairs
6	5	1	17%	31	8	5	1	Urban Affairs & Housing
4	3	1	25%	17	5	3	3	Game & Fisheries
0	-	-	n/a	12	4	4	1	Intergovernmental Operations
6	4	2	33%	15	6	4	2	Aging & Youth
0	-	-	n/a	9	4	3	1	Communications & Technology
145	97	48	33%	1,056	293	125	44	Totals or % for 20 committees

Source: PA General Assembly, Bills and Amendments, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/bills/>

*Does not include meetings which only considered nominations

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BIPARTISAN BILLS CITED IN THE *DYSFUNCTION BY DESIGN* REPORT?

Fair Districts PA's *Dysfunction by Design* report focused on the 2021-22 legislative session and highlighted ten bills with bipartisan support that did not receive final floor votes in the last and/or previous sessions. Although many were reintroduced in the 2023 session, some were reported out of committee, and several received a final floor vote, none have received final floor votes in both chambers, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3:
2023 Status of Bills Cited in *Dysfunction by Design* that Did Not Pass in the 2021-22 Session

Description	Prime Sponsor Number of Sponsors (by Party)	Any Action since 6/30/23?	Status as of December 31, 2023
Restrict the Acceptance of Gifts by Public Officials	HB 484 Solomon (D) 22 D, 12 R	N	In House State Government Committee
Install Carbon Monoxide Alarms in Child Care Facilities	SB 205 Fontana (D) 14 D, 3 R HB 494 McNeill D 28 D, 2 R	N	Unanimous Vote in Senate Health and Human Services Committee—given 1st consideration in the Senate. Bipartisan House Final Floor Vote 158-43. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Regionalize Fire and EMS Services	SB 501 Baker (R) 7 R, 9 D	Y	7-3 Vote in Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee—given 1st consideration in the Senate.
Establish Fair Standards for Charter Schools	HB 1422 Ciresi (D) 44 D, 1 R	Y	Final Floor Vote in House 122-81 Referred to Senate Education Committee
Outlaw puppy mills; shift the pet market toward humane sources	HB 846 McNeill (D) 49 D, 5 R	N	Referred to House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee No Companion Bill in Senate
Open Primaries Allow voters registered as Independents to vote in primary elections	SB 400 Laughlin (R) 10 D, 5 R HB 976 M. Brown (R) 7 D, 4 R HB 979 Solomon (D) 17 D, 1 R	Y	Referred to Senate State Government Committee 13-12 Vote in House State Government Committee 14-11 Vote in House State Government Committee. No votes from Republican Committee members on either bill.

Table 3: (continued)

Description	Prime Sponsor Number of Sponsors (by Party)	Any Action since 6/30/23?	Status as of December 31, 2023
Regulate and provide for insurance coverage of telemedicine	SB 739 Vogel (R) 7 D, 13 R	Y	Unanimous Vote in Senate Banking and Insurance Services Committee—given 1st consideration in the Senate.
Allow Independent Nurse Practitioner licensing through modernization of the Professional Nursing Law	SB 25 Bartolotta (R) 16 D, 15 R	N	Referred to Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee
Extending Automobile Lemon Law to Motorcycles	SB 155 Brooks (R) 6 D, 8 R HB 360 Pisciotano (D) 16 D, 3 R	N	Unanimous Vote in Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee—given 1st consideration in the Senate. Unanimous Final Floor Vote in House. Referred to Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee
Require lead testing for children and pregnant women	SB 514 Baker (R) 11 D, 4 R	N	Unanimous Vote in Senate Health and Services Committee—given 1st consideration in the Senate.

Sources: Fair Districts PA, *Dysfunction by Design?* and PA General Assembly, Bills and Amendments, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/bills/>.

CONCLUSIONS

This is the third in a series of reports, following *Dysfunction by Design* (December 2022) and *Off to a Slow Start* (October 2023).

Data presented in this report shows that many opportunities remain to move bipartisan bills through committee and on to a chamber floor for a vote. The report also shows that less than half of bills with a unanimous final floor vote in one chamber received a committee vote or a floor vote in the other chamber.

The 2023-24 legislative session is only half over. There is still time for the state House and state Senate committees to both address the many remaining bills with bipartisan sponsorship and those that came over from the other chamber with bipartisan and/or unanimous votes. There is still time for majority leaders to schedule more session days to ensure that there is time for final floor votes on bills that are reported from committees with bipartisan and/or unanimous votes. There is still time for the Pennsylvania state legislature to guarantee votes on solutions with bipartisan support in committee, on the floor and in both chambers.

In the meantime, FDPA anticipates that this report will help stimulate productive conversation about ways to allow more effective collaboration in the year and sessions to come. The fact that legislators from across the state and across the political spectrum are working hard to keep our communities safe, our economy strong and our children well cared for is much appreciated.

This volunteer research team from FDPA plans to publish an 18-month report after the summer recess, another at the close of this session and to complete several other reports on topics prompted by feedback from this and previous reports.

FDPA has repeatedly called for legislative rules that guarantee bipartisan bills a vote and that ensure every legislator has a meaningful role in deciding what bills get votes in committee and on the floor. Specifically, that:

- Bills with demonstrated bipartisan support must be guaranteed a vote in committee.
- Bills voted out of committee with bipartisan support must be guaranteed a final vote on the chamber floor.
- Bills passed in one chamber with bipartisan support should be given consideration in the other chamber.

TO REPEAT: The definition of bipartisan used for statistical analysis in this report is not the only, best or Fair Districts PA-endorsed definition.

What other measures of bipartisan support could further this discussion? And what actions would encourage collaboration across the aisle to address the many concerns of Pennsylvania citizens?

What other changes should FDPA and Pennsylvania citizen constituencies be asking for? What would make these changes possible?

We welcome your comments, questions, encouragement and suggestions and invite you to complete a simple feedback form to help us as we continue our work.

[CLICK HERE FOR FEEDBACK FORM, THANK YOU!](#)

Endnotes

- 1 Fair Districts PA, “Dysfunction by Design? Why Pennsylvania’s State Legislature is So Unproductive...And How We Can Fix It,” December 2022, https://www.fixharrisburg.com/files/ugd/70e28e_51b401b0efae4bbca3c24a005d34ab58.pdf?
- 2 Fair Districts PA, “Off to a slow start: PA legislative performance 2023,” October 2023, https://www.fixharrisburg.com/files/ugd/e99b5e_76f0b259d8b54bb0b7d567b584daec24.pdf
- 3 Stephen Caruso and Kate Huangpu, “A long budget impasse and partisan standoffs dominated the Pa. legislature in 2023,” Spotlight PA, December 19, 2023, <https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2023/12/pennsylvania-legislature-divided-2023-budget-impasse-shapiro-bipartisan/>

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