

CALIFORNIA SENATE OFFICE OF RESEARCH

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How Often Do Governors Say No?

Each bill passed by the Legislature shall be presented to the Governor. It becomes a statute if it is signed by the Governor. The Governor may veto it by returning it with any objections to the house of origin, which shall enter the objections in the journal and proceed to reconsider it. If a Governor does not sign and does not veto, the bill becomes law.

California Constitution, Article IV, §10 (a)

- In 1979 and 1980 the Legislature overrode the Governor's veto of two bills and eight items in the Budget Bill. Prior to these overrides, the Governor's veto had been overridden on only two occasions since 1973. The Legislature has not overridden a Governor's veto since 1980.
- This year, Governor Brown vetoed his highest percentage of bills (15.0%) in either of his terms as Governor. The second highest veto percentage was the first year of his third term (14.4% in 2011).
- This year, Brown considered 1,059 bills, the second highest number of bills in his third and fourth terms as Governor; he considered 1,074 bills in 2014. In each of his first two terms, Brown considered more bills each year.
- During his 14 years as Governor, Brown's has vetoed 8% of the bills he has considered; 15,935 bills have been chaptered and 1,304 bills have been vetoed.
- During his third and fourth terms as Governor, Brown has allowed four bills to become law without his signature.
- Governor Brown's average veto rate (13.3%) during his current term (2011–16) is triple his veto rate during his first two terms (4.6%).
- Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed more than a quarter (26.4%) of the 7,461 bills that he considered over his seven years in office. He signed the lowest average number of bills per year (784 a year over seven years).
- In 1982, Governor Brown vetoed just 30 of the 1,674 bills he considered, setting the record for the lowest number of vetoes and the lowest veto rate (1.8%).
- Governor Pat Brown considered approximately 7,500 bills during his two terms in office (1958–66). He vetoed (including "pocket vetoes"¹) 512 bills, or about 6.1%.
- The five years with the highest number of chaptered bills were all with Republican Governors (1971, 1984, 1967, 1990, 1988). Four of the five years with the highest number of vetoed bills (1990, 2008, 1988, 2000, 1998) were with Republican Governors (the exception was Governor Davis in 2000).
- Governor Deukmejian holds the record for the most bills vetoed in a year, 436 (1990); Governor Schwarzenegger is next with 414 vetoes (2008).

¹ From 1849 until the voters passed Proposition 1A (1966), governors could stop bills from becoming law by holding onto them. Proposition 1A ended the use of the so-called "pocket veto" by amending the California Constitution. If the Governor neither signs nor vetoes a bill, the bill becomes law and is considered "chaptered."

Most Chaptered Bills

| | | |
|-------|------|------------|
| 1,821 | 1971 | Reagan |
| 1,760 | 1984 | Deukmejian |
| 1,725 | 1967 | Reagan |
| 1,707 | 1990 | Deukmejian |
| 1,647 | 1988 | Deukmejian |
| 1,644 | 1982 | Brown |

Fewest Chaptered Bills

| | | |
|-----|------|----------------|
| 652 | 2009 | Schwarzenegger |
| 729 | 2005 | Schwarzenegger |
| 733 | 2010 | Schwarzenegger |
| 745 | 2011 | Brown |
| 750 | 2007 | Schwarzenegger |
| 763 | 2008 | Schwarzenegger |

Most Vetoes

| | | |
|-----|------|----------------|
| 436 | 1990 | Deukmejian |
| 414 | 2008 | Schwarzenegger |
| 372 | 1988 | Deukmejian |
| 362 | 2000 | Davis |
| 351 | 1998 | Wilson |
| 336 | 1992 | Wilson |

Fewest Vetoes

| | | |
|----|------|--------|
| 30 | 1982 | Brown |
| 35 | 1981 | Brown |
| 49 | 1978 | Brown |
| 58 | 2003 | Davis |
| 60 | 1979 | Brown |
| 61 | 1968 | Reagan |

Highest Percent Vetoeed

| | | |
|-------|------|----------------|
| 35.17 | 2008 | Schwarzenegger |
| 28.77 | 2010 | Schwarzenegger |
| 27.00 | 2009 | Schwarzenegger |
| 24.91 | 2000 | Davis |
| 24.58 | 2004 | Schwarzenegger |
| 24.53 | 1998 | Wilson |

Lowest Percent Vetoeed

| | | |
|------|------|--------|
| 1.79 | 1982 | Brown |
| 2.87 | 1981 | Brown |
| 3.31 | 1978 | Brown |
| 3.97 | 1968 | Reagan |
| 4.40 | 1979 | Reagan |
| 4.43 | 1980 | Brown |

Who Considered the Most Bills?

| | | |
|-------|------|------------|
| 2,143 | 1990 | Deukmejian |
| 2,063 | 1984 | Deukmejian |
| 2,019 | 1988 | Deukmejian |
| 1,975 | 1971 | Reagan |
| 1,839 | 1986 | Deukmejian |

Who Considered the Fewest Bills?

| | | |
|-----|------|----------------|
| 870 | 2011 | Brown |
| 893 | 2009 | Schwarzenegger |
| 896 | 2013 | Brown |
| 941 | 2015 | Brown |
| 961 | 2005 | Schwarzenegger |

Who Signed the Most Bills as Governor?

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Brown | 15,935 (1975–82; 2011–16) |
| Deukmejian | 12,530 (1983–90) |
| Reagan | 12,486 (1967–74) |
| Wilson | 9,394 (1991–98) |
| Schwarzenegger | 5,491 (2004–10) |
| Davis | 5,144 (1999–03) |

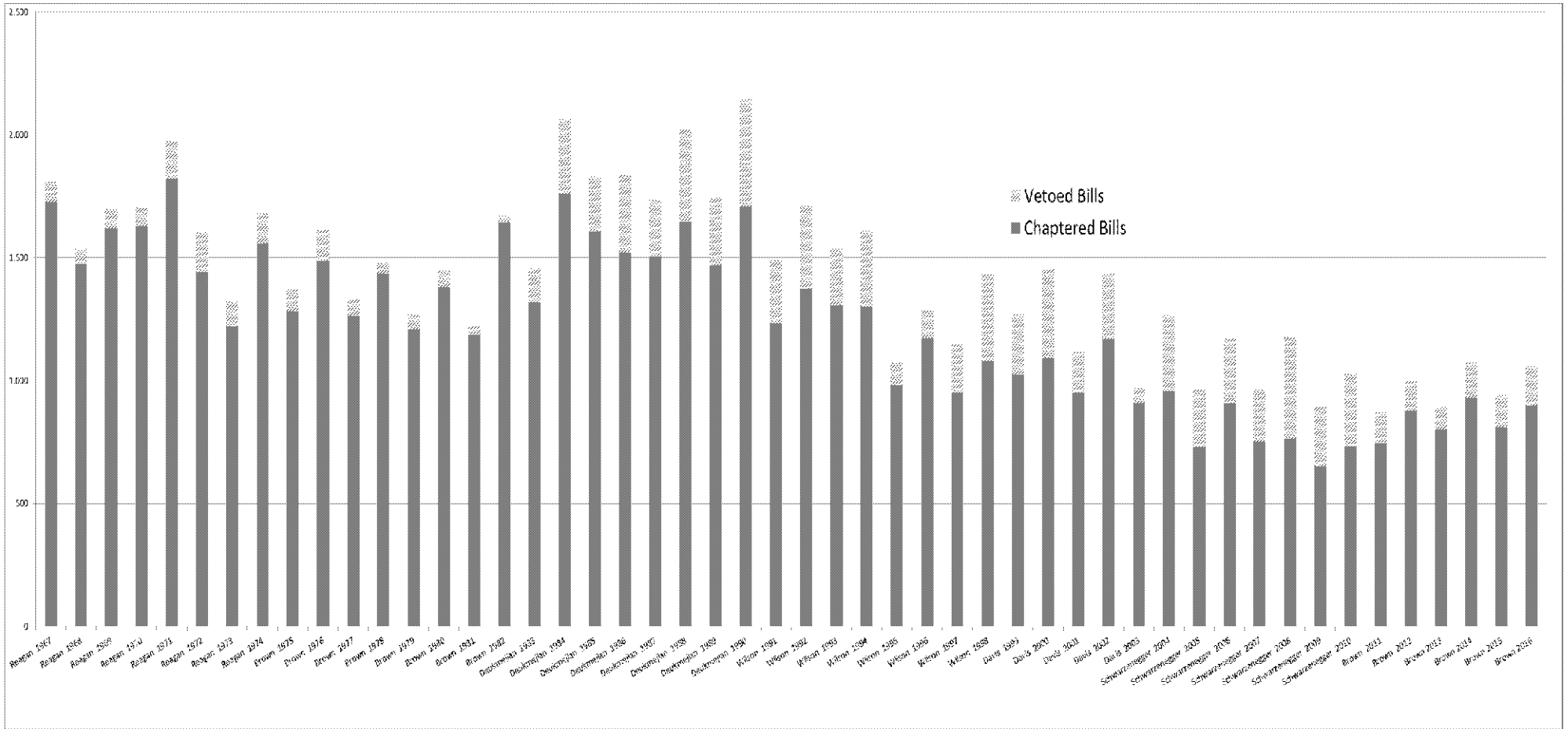
Who Vetoeed the Most Bills as Governor?

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Deukmejian | 2,298 (1983–90) |
| Schwarzenegger | 1,970 (2004–10) |
| Wilson | 1,890 (1991–98) |
| Brown | 1,304 (1975–82; 2011–16) |
| Davis | 1,098 (1999–03) |
| Reagan | 843 (1967–74) |

CHAPTERED AND VETOED BILLS: 1967–2016

| Year | Governor | Chaptered Bills | Vetoes | Total Bills | Percent Vetoed |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1967 | Reagan | 1,725 | 83 | 1,808 | 4.59 |
| 1968 | Reagan | 1,474 | 61 | 1,535 | 3.97 |
| 1969 | Reagan | 1,619 | 78 | 1,697 | 4.60 |
| 1970 | Reagan | 1,628 | 75 | 1,703 | 4.40 |
| 1971 | Reagan | 1,821 | 154 | 1,975 | 7.80 |
| 1972 | Reagan | 1,442 | 165 | 1,607 | 10.27 |
| 1973 | Reagan | 1,218 | 107 | 1,325 | 8.08 |
| 1974 | Reagan | 1,559 | 120 | 1,679 | 7.15 |
| 1975 | Brown | 1,280 | 93 | 1,373 | 6.77 |
| 1976 | Brown | 1,487 | 127 | 1,614 | 7.87 |
| 1977 | Brown | 1,261 | 70 | 1,331 | 5.26 |
| 1978 | Brown | 1,432 | 49 | 1,481 | 3.31 |
| 1979 | Brown | 1,207 | 60 | 1,267 | 4.74 |
| 1980 | Brown | 1,381 | 64 | 1,445 | 4.43 |
| 1981 | Brown | 1,186 | 35 | 1,221 | 2.87 |
| 1982 | Brown | 1,644 | 30 | 1,674 | 1.79 |
| 1983 | Deukmejian | 1,317 | 138 | 1,455 | 9.48 |
| 1984 | Deukmejian | 1,760 | 303 | 2,063 | 14.69 |
| 1985 | Deukmejian | 1,607 | 224 | 1,831 | 12.23 |
| 1986 | Deukmejian | 1,521 | 318 | 1,839 | 17.29 |
| 1987 | Deukmejian | 1,504 | 231 | 1,735 | 13.31 |
| 1988 | Deukmejian | 1,647 | 372 | 2,019 | 18.42 |
| 1989 | Deukmejian | 1,467 | 276 | 1,743 | 15.83 |
| 1990 | Deukmejian | 1,707 | 436 | 2,143 | 20.35 |
| 1991 | Wilson | 1,231 | 259 | 1,490 | 17.38 |
| 1992 | Wilson | 1,374 | 336 | 1,710 | 19.65 |
| 1993 | Wilson | 1,306 | 229 | 1,535 | 14.92 |
| 1994 | Wilson | 1,299 | 311 | 1,610 | 19.32 |
| 1995 | Wilson | 982 | 93 | 1,075 | 8.65 |
| 1996 | Wilson | 1,171 | 114 | 1,285 | 8.87 |
| 1997 | Wilson | 951 | 197 | 1,148 | 17.16 |
| 1998 | Wilson | 1,080 | 351 | 1,431 | 24.53 |
| 1999 | Davis | 1,025 | 246 | 1,271 | 19.35 |
| 2000 | Davis | 1,092 | 362 | 1,454 | 24.90 |
| 2001 | Davis | 948 | 169 | 1,117 | 15.13 |
| 2002 | Davis | 1,170 | 263 | 1,433 | 18.35 |
| 2003 | Davis | 909 | 58 | 967 | 6.00 |
| 2004 | Schwarzenegger | 954 | 311 | 1,265 | 24.58 |
| 2005 | Schwarzenegger | 729 | 232 | 961 | 24.14 |
| 2006 | Schwarzenegger | 910 | 262 | 1,172 | 22.35 |
| 2007 | Schwarzenegger | 750 | 214 | 964 | 22.20 |
| 2008 | Schwarzenegger | 763 | 414 | 1,177 | 35.17 |
| 2009 | Schwarzenegger | 652 | 241 | 893 | 26.99 |
| 2010 | Schwarzenegger | 733 | 296 | 1,029 | 28.77 |
| 2011 | Brown | 745 | 125 | 870 | 14.37 |
| 2012 | Brown | 876 | 120 | 996 | 12.05 |
| 2013 | Brown | 800 | 96 | 896 | 10.71 |
| 2014 | Brown | 931 | 143 | 1074 | 13.31 |
| 2015 | Brown | 808 | 133 | 941 | 14.13 |
| 2016 | Brown | 900 | 159 | 1059 | 15.01 |

CHAPTERED AND VETOED BILLS: 1967–2016



Notes

This information, from 1967 through 2015, counts only the bills from Regular Sessions, not the bills in Extraordinary Sessions. In 2016, this information includes Extraordinary Session bills.

The “Chaptered Bills” column on page 3 includes bills that a governor allowed to become law without signature. See California Constitution, Article IV, §10 (b)(3). For example, in 2000, Governor Davis signed 1,088 bills and allowed four measures to become law without his signature, for a total of 1,092 chaptered bills. In 2011, Governor Brown allowed one bill to become law without his signature. In 2014, Governor Brown allowed one bill to become law without his signature. In 2016, Governor Brown allowed two bills to become law without his signature.

For 2010, the “Chaptered Bills” column on page 3 includes four bills signed by Lieutenant Governor Abel Maldonado, as Acting Governor.

In the 1990s, each house of the Legislature introduced “bill limits” for each member. Currently, the limit is set at 40 bills in a two-year session.

The number of chaptered bills comes from the bound statutes for each year, plus information from the Office of the Governor. The number of vetoes comes from file records kept in the Office of the Governor. Robert Williams, Deputy Legislative Secretary to the Governor in several administrations, started those files in the 1950s. In subsequent administrations, the Governor’s legislative staff has maintained the files that Williams started. See the next page for the sources.

Sources

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