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 (15.1%) 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).
- This year, of the 159 bills Governor Brown vetoed, he vetoed 21 bills with messages.
- 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 Vetoed

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 Vetoed

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)

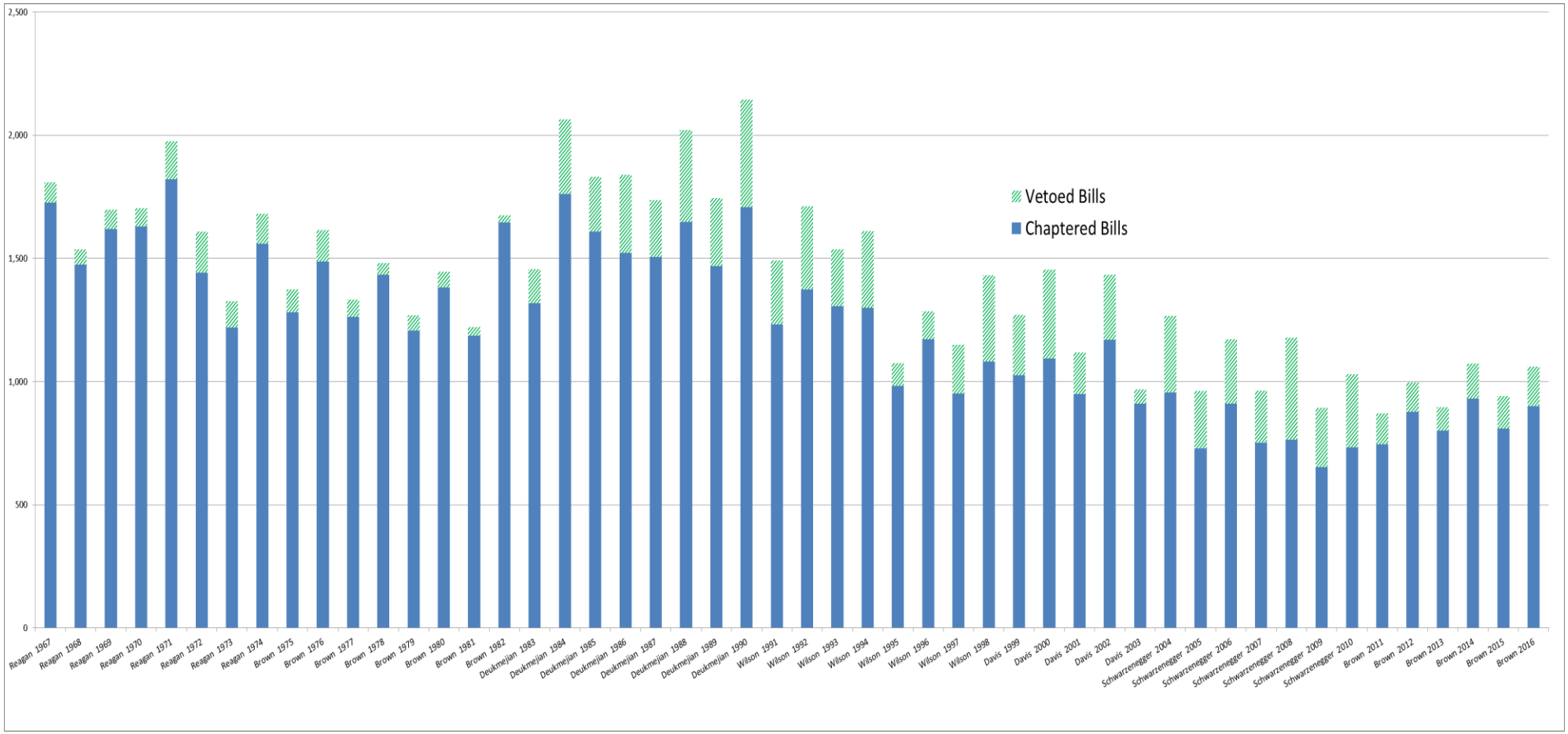
Who Vetoed the Most Bills as Governor?

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: 1967–2015

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 Davis allowed twoa 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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