

Senate Committee on Local Government
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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.

California Constitution, Article IV, §10 (a)

- Schwarzenegger has set a record for signing the fewest bills in a single year, approving only 632 of the measures that reached his desk in the 2009 regular session.
- The Legislature passed just 872 bills in 2009, the fewest in more than 40 years.
- Schwarzenegger vetoed 240 bills (27.52%), down from last year's record of 414 vetoes.
- Schwarzenegger signed the lowest annual average number of bills (790 a year over six years).
- Deukmejian vetoed the most bills (2,298 over eight years). However, with 1,673 vetoes over his six years, Schwarzenegger is close to Deukmejian's rate of 287 vetoes a year.
- Deukmejian vetoed the most bills in a single year (436 in 1990).
- Schwarzenegger has vetoed nearly twice as many bills in six years (1,673) as Reagan did in eight years (843).
- In his five years, Davis vetoed twice as many bills (1,098) as Brown did in eight years (528).
- In 1982, Brown vetoed just 30 bills, setting the record for the lowest number of vetoes.
- Wilson signed the fewest bills of any recent, two-term governor (9,324 over eight years).
- Although political conservatives, Deukmejian and Reagan signed more bills than Brown, the more activist liberal.
- The five years with the highest number of chaptered bills were all with Republican governors (1971, 1984, 1967, 1990, 1988).

Most Chaptered Bills

1,821	1971	Reagan	632	2009	Schwarzenegger
1,760	1984	Deukmejian	729	2005	Schwarzenegger
1,725	1967	Reagan	750	2007	Schwarzenegger
1,707	1990	Deukmejian	763	2008	Schwarzenegger
1,647	1988	Deukmejian	909	2003	Davis
1,644	1982	Brown	910	2006	Schwarzenegger

Fewest Chaptered Bills**Most Vetoes**

436	1990	Deukmejian	30	1982	Brown
414	2008	Schwarzenegger	35	1981	Brown
372	1998	Deukmejian	49	1978	Brown
362	2000	Davis	58	2003	Davis
351	1998	Wilson	60	1979	Brown
336	1992	Wilson	61	1968	Reagan

Fewest Vetoes**Highest Percent Vetoeed**

35.17	2008	Schwarzenegger	1.79	1982	Brown
27.52	2009	Schwarzenegger	2.87	1981	Brown
24.91	2000	Davis	3.31	1978	Brown
24.58	2004	Schwarzenegger	3.97	1968	Reagan
24.53	1998	Wilson	4.40	1979	Reagan
24.14	2005	Schwarzenegger	4.43	1980	Brown

Lowest Percent Vetoeed**Who signed the most bills?**

Deukmejian	12,530	1,566/year
Reagan	12,486	1,561/year
Brown	10,753	1,344/year
Wilson	9,324	1,166/year
Davis (5 years)	5,144	1,029/year
Schwarzenegger	4,738	790/year

Who vetoed the most bills?

Deukmejian	2,298	287/year
Wilson	1,890	236/year
Schwarzenegger	1,673	279/year
Davis (5 years)	1,098	220/year
Reagan	843	105/year
Brown	528	66/year

What's the highest year for chapters?

Reagan	5 th year	(1971)	1,821
(1973)	1,218		
Brown	8 th year	(1982)	1,644
Deukmejian	2 nd year	(1984)	1,760
Wilson	2 nd year	(1992)	1,374
Davis	4 th year	(2002)	1,170
Schwarzenegger	1 st year	(2004)	954

What's the lowest year for chapters?

Reagan	7 th year	(1981)	1,186
Brown	7 th year	(1981)	1,186
Deukmejian	1 st year	(1983)	1,317
Wilson	5 th year	(1995)	982
Davis	5 th year	(2003)	909
Schwarzenegger	6 th year	(2009)	632

<u>Year</u>	<u>Governor</u>	<u>Chaptered Bills</u>	<u>Vetoes</u>	<u>Total Bills</u>	<u>Percent Vetoed</u>
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	24.91
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	632	240	872	27.52

Notes & Sources

This information counts only bills from regular sessions, not bills in Extraordinary Sessions.

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.

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

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