

What Bills Newsom Signed and Vetoed

BY ERIC HE AND MADI ALEXANDER | 11/03/2023 08:00:00 AM EDT

PRO POINTS

- **California Gov. Gavin Newsom had an eventful bill signing period, approving 890 measures and vetoing 156.** The veto rate of [just under 15 percent is consistent](#) with the governor's average during his tenure.
- **The governor approved several first-in-the-nation bills, including bans on [certain cosmetics and food additives](#), landmark [climate disclosure regulations](#) and [an Ebony alert](#) for missing Black youth.**
- **But Newsom delivered some surprising vetoes, rejecting [several labor priorities](#), as well as a cap on the [price of insulin](#), a ban on [caste discrimination](#), [free condoms](#) in high schools and a bill requiring judges to weigh [gender identity affirmation](#) in child custody cases.**
- **Cost was overwhelmingly the most common reason Newsom cited when sending back bills,** accounting for more than 40 percent of his vetoes. The governor cited a \$30 billion shortfall in the state budget, noting that the bills sent to his desk would've added a total of \$19 billion in unaccounted costs.
- **Newsom's rumored presidential ambitions could be a factor behind vetoing several bills sent to him** by an increasingly progressive Legislature that would be unpopular in red states.

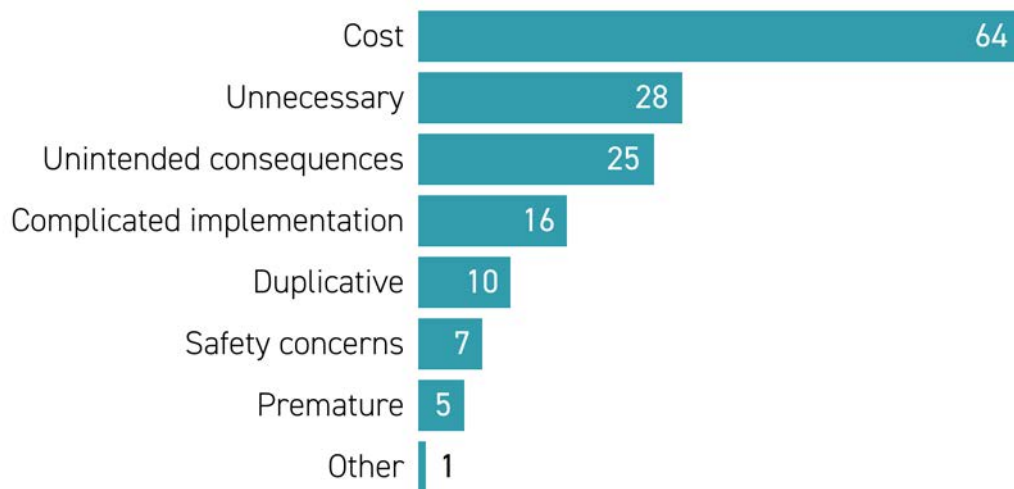
HOW WE GOT HERE

Labor unions – which have tremendous influence in California politics – successfully advanced many of their priorities in the Legislature, but had their big year somewhat subdued by Newsom's vetoes. The governor signed legislation raising the minimum wage for [health care workers](#) to \$25 an hour and [fast food workers](#) to \$20 an hour. He also approved a bill to increase the required [number of paid sick days](#) and a measure allowing [staffers in the Legislature](#) to unionize.

But Newsom toed the line and handed some wins to business groups by rejecting other headline labor bills. The governor declined to [allow striking workers](#) to access unemployment insurance, citing cost, in the wake of labor strikes across various industries in California this year.

41 percent of Newsom's vetoes in 2023 were due to cost concerns

Reasons cited for California Gov. Gavin Newsom's vetoes during the 2023 legislative session



Note: For vetoes with multiple reasons cited, the most prominent reason was used.

Source: Gov. Newsom's office
Eric He/POLITICO

Amid concerns over the safety of self-driving vehicles, Newsom also rejected a bill to [require a driver](#) in autonomous trucks, saying such a measure was unnecessary. Additionally, he rejected legislation that would have granted workplace [protections to domestic workers](#), [extend the notice time](#) to employees prior to layoffs and [require companies to provide](#) a 30-day notice before sending workers back to the office.

The governor's reasons for rejecting labor bills were mixed, but cost – Newsom's most popular veto explanation – was cited in only two of the 13 labor measure vetoes analyzed by POLITICO.

Newsom vetoed 13 labor bills this year

Labor bills vetoed by California Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2023

Bill ▲	The bill would have...	Veto reason
AB 1145	Expanded PTSD treatment coverage for certain state employees who care for inmates and hospital patients	● Unnecessary
AB 1213	Provided retroactive disability payments to injured workers who successfully appealed treatment denial	● Unintended consequences
AB 1356	Increased advanced notice period employers must provide workers before layoffs	● Unintended consequences
AB 504	Allowed public employees in a union to sympathy-strike with other public employee unions	● Unintended consequences
AB 699	Given San Diego lifeguards expanded medical coverage for certain health conditions	● Unnecessary
SB 627	Required large chain businesses to provide a 60-day notice before an expected closure	● Complicated implementation
SB 640	Required the CSU school system to contract food service or hotel developers that allow unions	● Premature
SB 686	Given workplace protections to domestic workers	● Complicated implementation
SB 716	Allowed excluded state employees to request binding arbitration to address grievance disputes	● Cost
SB 725	Required grocery stores to provide severance to workers laid off after mergers or acquisitions	● Unnecessary
SB 731	Required employers to provide workers a 30-day notice to return to office	● Complicated implementation
SB 751	Addressed a loophole in agreements between waste hauling companies, workers during labor disputes	● Unnecessary
SB 799	Allowed striking workers to access unemployment benefits	● Cost

Source: Gov. Newsom's office, POLITICO reporting
Madi Alexander and Eric He/POLITICO

Newsom was not so moderate when it came to signing sweeping housing legislation, touting a [package of 56 bills](#) intended to streamline

housing and extend tenant protections. But for more than half of his 10 housing-related vetoes — which included a [social housing pilot program](#) and creating a [grant program](#) to provide housing for tribes — he cited cost.

With California facing a housing crisis and planning [for 2.5 million more homes](#) by 2030, Newsom seems keen on proposals pushed by the YIMBY — “Yes In My Backyard” — movement that make it easier for developers to build — over any objections or the inability of local jurisdictions to meet their housing allocations.

The major housing legislation of the session came from state Sen. [Scott Wiener](#) (D-San Francisco), who successfully negotiated [an extension](#) of an existing measure forcing cities behind on planning for housing to follow their own rules for approving projects. Wiener also [authored a bill](#) allowing churches to build housing on their property.

After signing a separate housing bill to [remove barriers](#) to building university housing, [Newsom said](#) that “California will not allow NIMBYism to take hold,” referring to the “Not In My Backyard” anti-development movement in the Golden State.

Newsom’s own signature proposal — a ballot measure reforming the Mental Health Services Act — also survived the Legislature. The plan would [refocus spending](#) on mental health as part of a broader push to move people from the streets into housing, in addition to creating a [\\$6 billion bond](#) for 10,000 new treatment beds. Another mental health bill that Newsom signed [expands the definition](#) of those who could be eligible for conservatorship and involuntarily admitted for treatment.

WHAT'S NEXT

The governor’s vetoes may not curtail speculation that he has ambitions for higher office. Newsom — who catapulted into the national spotlight when he started issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in 2004 after becoming mayor of San Francisco — has put the stop sign on some progressive proposals as California’s governor two decades later.

Newsom is termed out in 2026, and at the very least is attempting to stay in the national conversation. He’s done [interviews on FOX News](#), [waded into public spats](#) with Florida’s Republican Gov. [Ron DeSantis](#) (the pair is [set to debate](#) later this month) and wrapped up a climate trip to China where he [met with President Xi Jinping](#).

Next year is the last year of the two-year session in the California Legislature, and there will be greater urgency to pass legislation that

stalled this year, such as [restrictions on solitary confinement](#), requirements for tech companies to [pay journalism usage fees](#) and [regulations on ticket sellers](#).

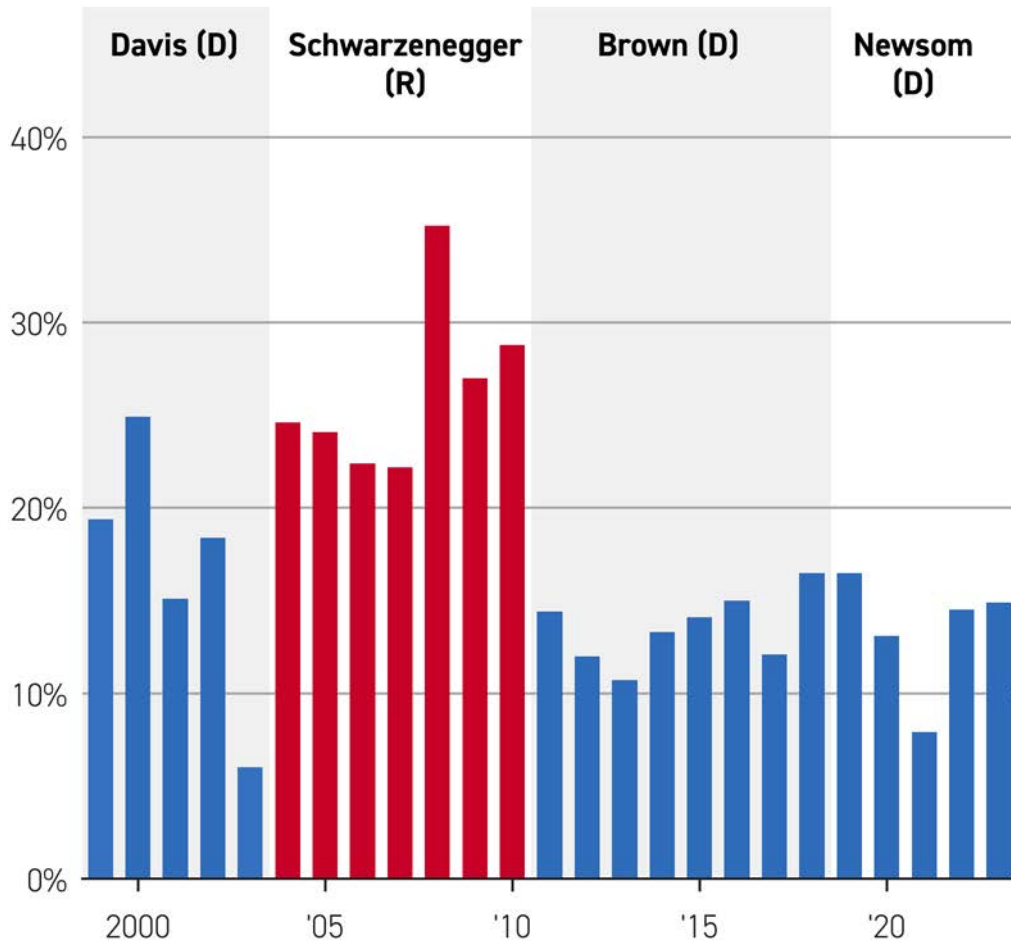
Additionally, 2024 is an election year, which could impact what legislation lawmakers bring forward and how they vote. Lawmakers have already floated [protections against artificial intelligence](#), a single-payer health care measure and legislation making it easier to prosecute auto burglaries for next year.

The Legislature also has two new leaders, with [Robert Rivas](#) and [Mike McGuire](#) both installed just this year as heads of the Assembly and Senate, respectively. Rivas usurped Assemblymember [Anthony Rendon](#) (D-Lakewood) over the summer in a bitter speaker battle, but both are progressive ideologically. McGuire's succession to take over for Sen. [Toni Atkins](#) (D-San Diego) was [backed by moderate Democrats](#), but his leadership is expected to serve as a stopgap as he is also termed out in 2026.

Rivas and McGuire will be in charge of a shifting rank-and-file, which saw more than a quarter of its members turnover in 2022 due to census redistricting and term limits. Next year will see at least a 20 percent turnover based on term limits alone, and groups such as Close The Gap [are optimistic](#) that it will lead to more women and diverse candidates winning office. A Legislature that tips more and more toward the progressive, labor-friendly wing contrasted with Newsom's centrist instincts could prove to be an interesting dynamic to watch in the remaining years of the governor's term.

Newsom's 2023 veto rate consistent with recent years in Sacramento

Percentage of bills vetoed, by California governor



Source: California Senate Office of Research
Madi Alexander/POLITICO

POWER PLAYERS

- **The Legislative progressive caucus:** In prior years, the Legislature spared Newsom from having to decide on some controversial bills, but the increasing sway of the progressive wing combined with the large turnover in members sent measures like decriminalizing psychedelic mushrooms and providing unemployment benefits to striking workers through to the governor's desk. The caucus, though still outflanked by moderate Democrats, had a record 29 members this past session.
- **SEIU and California Labor Federation:** Labor groups, led by SEIU and the California Labor Federation, were instrumental in several high-profile bills that passed this session. Newsom tapped former SEIU president Laphonza Butler to serve in the Senate following the death of California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, a former assemblymember, recently became the state's top union leader as head of the labor federation.
- **Sen. Scott Wiener:** The San Francisco Democrat had an active session, authoring landmark climate disclosure legislation, two major housing bills, an insulin price cap measure and the proposal to decriminalize psychedelic mushrooms. He currently has his eyes on Rep. Nancy Pelosi's seat in Congress, but given that the former House Speaker intends to run for reelection in 2024, Wiener is likely to remain a key state senator for a third term.
- **California Chamber of Commerce:** The Legislature sent seven of the 19 bills the chamber designated on its dreaded "job killer" list to the governor — the highest rate at which lawmakers have defied the chamber since 2007. It's a sign that business groups might be losing friends in Sacramento; however, Newsom still vetoed three of the seven bills, including the proposal to give striking workers unemployment benefits.