



# General Assembly Freedom Index 2013 Session

April 2014

## SCORECARD

This index ranks General Assembly members from highest score to lowest score in terms of the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity's judgment of bills' effects on aspects of freedom. Chamber, district, and party are given, and final scores are based on representatives' and senators' floor votes on select legislation. See [www.rifreedom.org](http://www.rifreedom.org) for additional information, including a more-detailed methodology.

<b>Key:</b> Letters/numbers after names are chamber, district, party, and Freedom Index score.			
1	Newberry	H48 R	19.9
2	Costa	H31 R	16.8
3	Trillo	H24 R	-1.4
4	Giarrusso	H30 R	-21.9
5	Raptakis	S 33 D	-23.9
6	Chippendale	H40 R	-24.7
7	Hodgson	S 35 R	-27.1
8	Bates	S 32 R	-28.8
9	Kettle	S 21 R	-29.3
10	Morgan	H26 R	-31.5
11	O'Neill	H59 D	-32.2
12	O'Neill	S 17 I	-32.5
13	Cote	S 24 D	-33.5
14	MacBeth	H52 D	-37.2
15	Nunes	H25 D	-38.5
16	Algiere	S 38 R	-39.7
17	Ottiano	S 11 R	-41.4
18	Lombardi	H8 D	-41.6
19	Sheehan	S 36 D	-44.9
20	Dickinson	H35 D	-45.1
21	San Bento	H58 D	-47.9
22	McLaughlin	H57 D	-48.1
23	Lima	H14 D	-49.7
24	Phillips	H51 D	-50.5
25	Fogarty	S 23 D	-51.7
26	Palumbo	H16 D	-52.1
27	Goldin	S 3 D	-52.4
28	Costantino	H44 D	-52.6
29	Jacquard	H17 D	-53.0
30	Picard	S 20 D	-53.2
31	O'Grady	H46 D	-53.3
32	Valencia	H39 D	-54.0
33	Cicccone	S 7 D	-54.1
34	O'Brien	H54 D	-54.4
35	Carnevale	H13 D	-54.4
36	Ruggiero	H74 D	-54.7
37	Felag	S 10 D	-54.9
38	Sosnowski	S 37 D	-54.9
39	McCaffrey	S 29 D	-55.5
40	Lombardo	S 25 D	-55.8
41	Nesselbush	S 15 D	-55.8
42	Walaska	S 30 D	-56.0
43	Guthrie	H28 D	-56.3
44	DiPalma	S 12 D	-56.4
45	Satchell	S 9 D	-56.8
46	DaPonte	S 14 D	-57.1
47	Cimini	H7 D	-57.2
48	Walsh	H36 D	-57.3
49	Crowley	S 16 D	-58.1
50	Craven	H32 D	-58.4
51	Miller	S 28 D	-58.7
52	Pearson	S 19 D	-58.7
53	Corvese	H55 D	-58.7
54	Metts	S 6 D	-59.4
55	Tomasso	H29 D	-59.8
56	Gallo	S 27 D	-60.2
57	Lombardi	S 26 D	-60.2
58	Doyle	S 8 D	-60.2
59	Conley	S 18 D	-60.3
60	Marcello	H41 D	-61.0
61	DeSimone	H5 D	-61.4
62	Paiva-Weed	S 13 D	-61.5
63	Tanzi	H34 D	-61.9
64	Lynch	S 31 D	-62.4
65	Archambault	S 22 D	-62.4
66	Cool Rumsey	S 34 D	-62.4
67	Jabour	S 5 D	-62.4
68	Ruggerio	S 4 D	-62.4
69	Almeida	H12 D	-62.4
70	Baldelli-Hunt	H49 D	-62.4
71	Melo	H64 D	-62.8
72	Naughton	H21 D	-62.9
73	Casey	H50 D	-62.9
74	Goodwin	S 1 D	-63.0
75	Edwards	H70 D	-63.3
76	Lally	H33 D	-63.6
77	Hull	H6 D	-64.5
78	Amore	H65 D	-64.5
79	Hearn	H66 D	-65.0
80	Bennett	H20 D	-65.2
81	Finn	H72 D	-65.2
82	Messier	H62 D	-65.2
83	Pichardo	S 2 D	-65.2
84	Coderre	H60 D	-65.4
85	Ferri	H22 D	-66.8
86	Canario	H71 D	-67.5
87	Diaz	H11 D	-68.4
88	Fellela	H43 D	-68.9
89	Marshall	H68 D	-69.6
90	Abney	H73 D	-69.9
91	Kennedy	H38 D	-70.1
92	Gallison	H69 D	-70.6
93	Malik	H67 D	-70.6
94	Silva	H56 D	-71.2
95	Azzinaro	H37 D	-71.3
96	Serpa	H27 D	-71.7
97	McNamara	H19 D	-71.7
98	Williams	H9 D	-72.6
99	Ajello	H3 D	-72.6
100	Handy	H18 D	-73.1
101	Keable	H47 D	-73.4
102	Kazarian	H63 D	-73.6
103	Palangio	H3 D	-73.8
104	Johnston	H61 D	-74.1
105	Ucci	H42 D	-74.8
106	Winfield	H53 D	-74.8
107	Martin	H75 D	-75.0
108	Fox	H4 D	-76.4
109	Slater	H10 D	-76.4
110	Shekarchi	H23 D	-76.9
111	Blazejewski	H2 D	-76.9
112	Mattiello	H15 D	-76.9
113	Ackerman	H45 D	-78.5

## NOTE FROM THE CEO

Our Center created its annual Freedom Index and legislator scorecard in Rhode Island as a means of informing citizens which legislators have voted to protect our freedoms and which have voted to further encroach upon our liberties.

Perhaps no freedom is more sacred to Americans than the right to free speech. However, a coordinated national attack has been mounted that would limit our Constitutional right to openly and rigorously debate public policy and to hold accountable elected officials and candidates.

Within the past year, the IRS proposed new regulations that would greatly restrict the ability of 501(c)(4) advocacy organizations to conduct such activity, regulations that threaten also to undercut the work of 501(c)(3) research organizations such as the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity.

The Freedom Index is intended as a tool to educate the people of Rhode Island about the activities of their government. However, under many circumstances, the proposed IRS regulations would

redefine the publishing of legislator names on any kind of scorecard — such as our Freedom Index — as “political activity.”

As a symbol of protest against these draconian proposals to restrict the freedom of grassroots advocacy groups to engage in related analysis, our Center initially published its Freedom Index for the 2013 RI General Assembly session with the names of legislators redacted. We had already based the index on a reading of legislation without regard to how individual legislators voted. By redacting legislators names, we took the additional step of associating the results only with the electoral districts in whose names the actions are taken.

For now, the rules allow us to present the index with the names intact, as we have done with this version. We hope to remain this free.

*“A properly functioning democracy depends on an informed electorate,”* said Thomas Jefferson. We agree, and our Center decries this attempt by the IRS to limit free speech, to shut down public debate, and to inhibit the vital process of providing educational information to the citizenry.

Mike Stenhouse

## AVERAGE SCORES

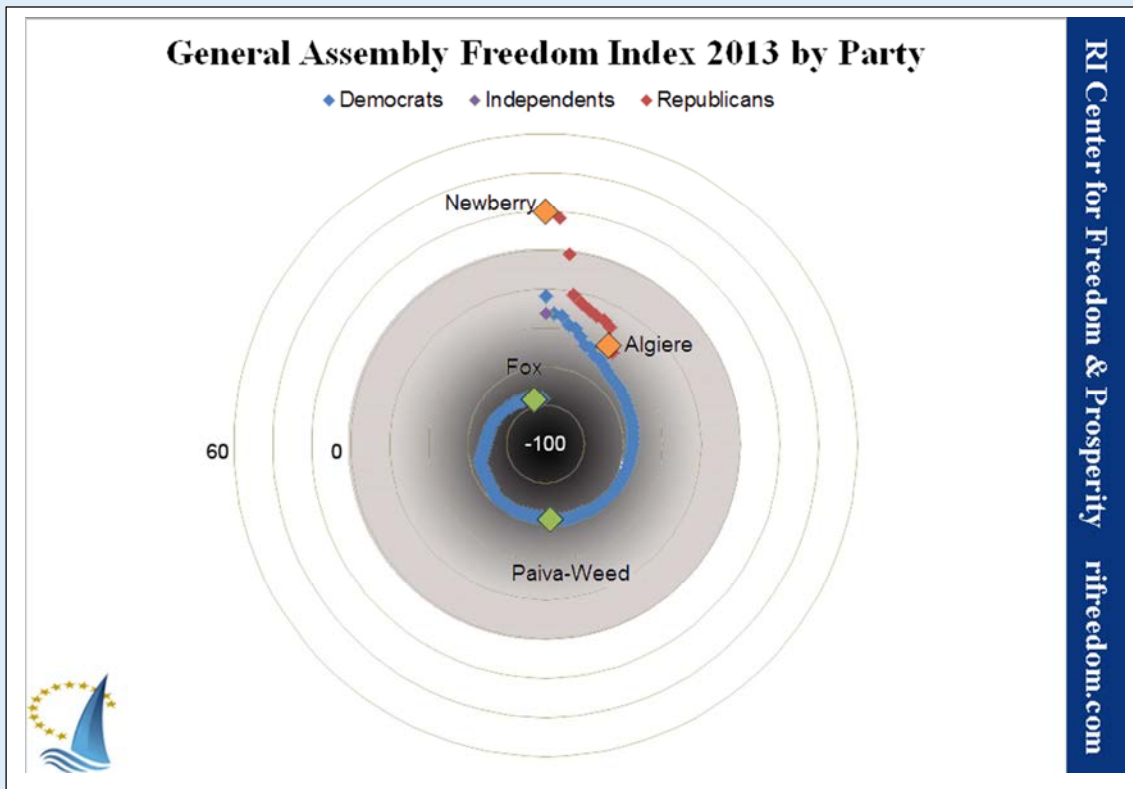
General Assembly: -56.6 (2012: -25.4)				
House: -58.6 (2012: -24.1)		Senate: -52.4 (2012: -27.9)		
Democrats: -63.1 (2012: -32.2)	Republicans: -7.1 (2012: 28.8)	Democrats: -56.1 (2012: -36.3)	Republicans: -33.2 (2012: 1.0)	Independents: -32.5 (2012: -18.3)

- Average *Regulatory Environment* index of -67.5 (down from -49.0)
- Average *Tax & Budget* index of -37.2 (down from -26.0)
- Average *Constitutional Government* index of -61.6 (down from -9.1)
- Average *Public Sector Labor* index of -44.0 (down from 16.7)
- Average *Education Reform* index of -86.4 (there were no bills in this category last year)



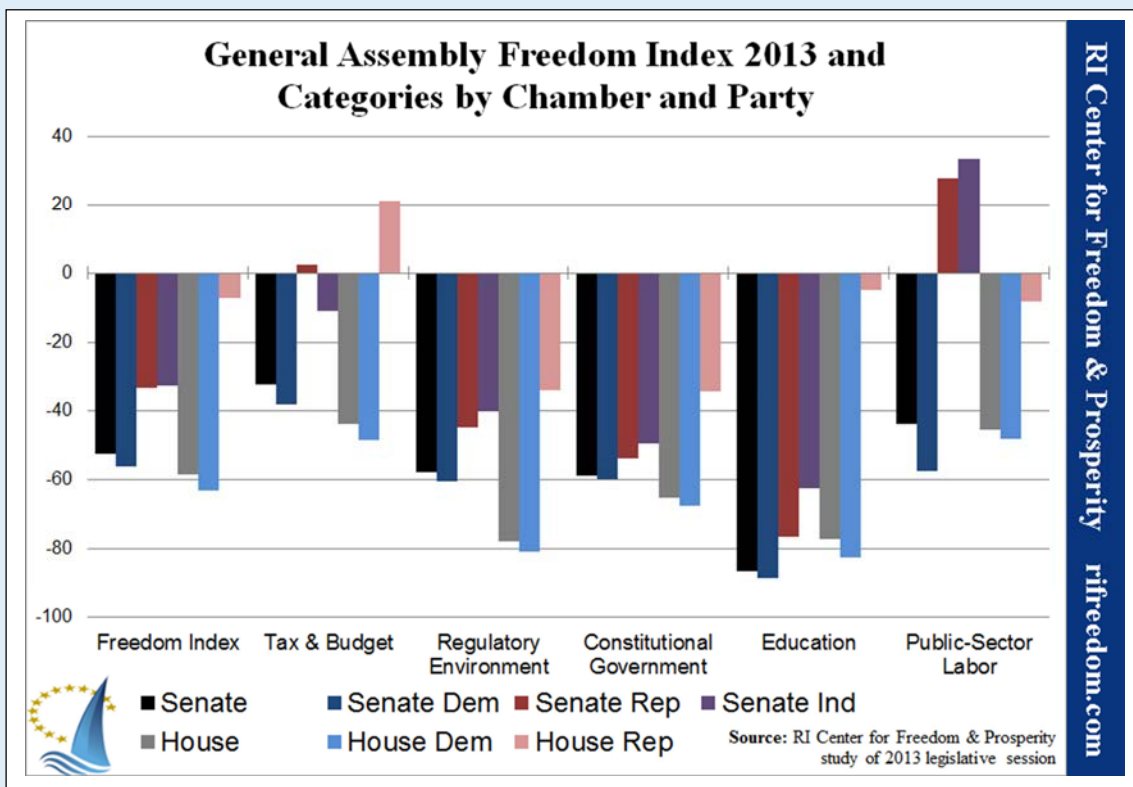
## Legislators' Scores on the General Assembly Freedom Index, 2013

*The entire General Assembly slid significantly down the hole, during the 2013 session, as compared with the 2012 session.*



## Comparison of Chambers and Parties

*Very few groupings of legislators by chamber or party produce net positive votes in any category.*



## EXPLANATION

The second-annual General Assembly Freedom Index by the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity scores Ocean State lawmakers on their level of support for principles of freedom as proven by their votes on the floors of the House and Senate.

The index examines legislators' votes in terms of their likely effect on the free market, the size and scope of government, the balance of residents' interests against those of public employees and beneficiaries, and the constitutional structure of a divided government with limited power over the people whom it represents. The Center reviewed every bill that received a roll-call vote by the full membership of either chamber and selected 116 that fit its understanding of these criteria. (Companion bills only count once.)

The resulting scores give a detailed sense of each legislator's priorities beyond a few high-profile issues. We further divided bills into five categories:

- **Tax & budget:** bills that affect the tax structure in Rhode Island and/or that relate to government expenditures, just driving or relieving the pressure on taxation
- **Regulatory environment:** bills that make it more or less difficult to live and do business in the state by imposing regulations
- **Constitutional government:** bills that affect the structure of the government, as well as the scope of government in its authority over residents' lives
- **Public sector labor:** bills related to the relationship between the government's employees and itself and the electorate

- **Education reform:** bills that advance or impede the reform of the state's public education system, in terms of both cost and quality

Most legislation has implications for more than one of these categories. For the purposes of this index, we applied our subjective sense of the area of core effect and sorted the bills accordingly. If, for example, a bill having to do with education seemed to us intended to secure the role of public employees, we classified that bill as Public Sector Labor, not Education Reform.

## Methodology

**1) Determine weighting:** Each selected bill received a weight ranging from +3 to -3, as determined by the RI Center for Freedom & Prosperity. Negative weights indicate legislation that creates or expands an agency, government program/function, or tax; creates new regulatory burdens; is hostile to constitutional principles; or otherwise conflicts with the principles that guide the Center. Positive factors were assigned to bills in line with those principles. Companion bills in the House and Senate were weighted identically. To determine the weightings, the Center requested reviews of all chosen legislation from a half dozen engaged Rhode Islanders with similar principles and combined the range of results for a final weighting.

**2) Determine vote:** Each legislator received a +1 or -1 vote factor, depending on whether he or she voted FOR or AGAINST a particular bill, respectively. If a legislator did not vote on a bill, he or she received a +0.25 if the bill passed or a -0.25 if the bill failed. Legislators who abstained from voting received a +0.75 or a -0.75 vote factor depending on if the bill passed or failed.





**3) Calculate weighted vote:** Multiplying the weighting factor and the vote factor produced a weighted vote score for each legislator for each bill.

**4) Calculate the legislator score:** The cumulative score for all bills for each legislator determined that legislator's overall score.

**5) Calculate Freedom Index:** Dividing each legislator's total score by the maximum possible for the appropriate chamber provided his or her Freedom Index, or a percentage of the best possible score he or she could have achieved. In 2013, the "perfect" scores are 143 for the House and 133 for the Senate.

To rank the legislators, the Center sorted them by their Freedom Index scores and then, in the cases of

ties, by their scores in each category, in the following order: Regulatory Environment, Tax & Budget, Constitutional Government, Public Sector Labor, and Education Reform. When legislators' results were still identical, the Center adjusted them in order of their apparent stature and power within their chambers.

It should be noted that the complexity not only of the law but of political theory in general can make assessments of the sort described above subjective and very difficult. People reviewing the index should consider the results to be the best judgment of the Center, given our collected experience and expertise.