

WALKERS IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ken Block, Chairman of WatchdogRI.org

Did you ever wonder how many votes your state senator and representative missed this past year?

I never gave it much thought until the last day of the 2016 Rhode Island legislative session, when the last votes were being cast as the sun was rising after an all-night spasm of deal making and lawmaking. Punch drunk representatives staggered home after casting a mind-boggling 209 votes in less than 48 hours, while our senators cast 141 votes.

WatchdogRI and the Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity teamed up to analyze the voting records of every incumbent legislator for legislative years 2014, 2015, and 2016. The Center provided raw data in electronic form from their data provider LegiNation Inc., and WatchdogRI performed the data analytics.

After discarding resolutions and marriage solemnizations, we were left with 615 votes in the House and 532 votes in the Senate for 2016.

In the House, the top 10 legislators with the most missed votes were:

- Thomas Palangio (D, Providence): 536
- John Carnevale (D, Providence): 356
- Arthur Corvese (D, North Providence): 263
- Jared Nunes (D, Coventry/West Warwick): 221
- Joseph Trillo (R, Warwick): 209
- John Lombardi (D, Providence): 202
- Robert Jacquard (D, Cranston): 157
- Edith Ajello (D, Providence): 142
- Nicholas Mattiello (D, Cranston): 126

- Dan Reilly (R, Portsmouth/Middletown): 105

For the Senate, the top 10 legislators with the most missed votes were:

- Frank Lombardi (D, Cranston): 138
- Donna Nesselbush (D, Pawtucket/North Providence): 130
- Edward O'Neill (R, Lincoln/North Providence): 118
- Frank Lombardo (D, Johnston): 115
- Leonidas Raptakis (D, East Greenwich/West Greenwich/Coventry): 107
- Nicholas Kettle (R, Coventry/Foster/Scituate/West Greenwich): 92
- James Doyle (D, Pawtucket): 91
- Elizabeth Crowley (D, Central Falls/Pawtucket): 89
- Joshua Miller (D, Providence/Cranston): 77
- William Walaska (D, Warwick): 77

Representatives Robert Phillips (D, Cumberland/Woonsocket) and Raymond Johnston (D, Pawtucket) each missed only one vote, joining 23 other representatives who missed fewer than 10 votes.

Senator John Pagliarini (R, Bristol/Portsmouth/Tiverton) did not miss a single vote, joining 15 other senators who missed fewer than 10 votes.

Every representative who understandably decided to go home after midnight on June 18 missed 43 votes or 7% of all votes held for the year. A representative who had a family emergency the last two days of the session would have missed 34% of all votes held for the year.

We all know that the human mind works best well rested, yet 7% of all votes held in the House this

year were held after 1:00 a.m. on the last day of the session. Those bills contained 234 pages of legalese. I wonder how many legislators read those pages while most of us were fast asleep?

The practice of pushing most important votes to the end of the legislative session can leave entire legislative districts with no representation. Would you vote for a legislator if you knew he or she would not vote more on than a third of the bills voted upon by the General Assembly in a year? The rules of operation of our General Assembly make it possible for any legislator to miss that many votes if any personal crisis comes up in the tiny 48-hour end-of-session window.

In the seven years that I spent advocating to eliminate the master lever, legislative leadership was fond of explaining away the 50 years it took to get the job done as part of the slow and deliberative legislative process. There is nothing slow or deliberative about the final 48-hour frenzy of last minute bills, amendments, and votes.

Nothing mandates that our legislature operate in such a circus-like manner. Simply passing 10 bills a week over the six-month session would eliminate the end-of-session blitz. Transparency would be increased and legislators would theoretically be better informed about the bills they were voting upon.

The legislature should consider a 25-bill weekly limit (not including resolutions and marriage solemnizations). As a deliberative body, no floor votes should occur after 9:30 p.m. — ever.

Rhode Island needs leaders who are dedicated to changing our political culture. Will we get the leadership we need, or will we be perpetually left with an annual legislative hangover?

Rhode Island Senators' Missed Votes, 2014-2016

		2016		2015		2014		2015-2016	
	District	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%	%	Rank
Total votes		532		314		486			
Dennis Algiere	38	11	2.1	12	3.8	9	1.9	2.7	22
Steve Archambault	22	5	0.9	0	0.0	1	0.2	0.6	34
Frank Ciccone	7	29	5.5	57	18.2	345	71.0	10.2	13
William Conley	18	10	1.9	3	1.0	2	0.4	1.5	27
Marc Cote	24	8	1.5	0	0.0	26	5.3	0.9	31
Cynthia Coyne	32	9	1.7	5	1.6			1.7	25
Elizabeth Crowley	16	89	16.7	47	15.0	57	11.7	16.1	6
Daniel DaPonte	14	21	3.9	39	12.4	71	14.6	7.1	15
Lou DiPalma	12	7	1.3	12	3.8	54	11.1	2.2	24
James Doyle	8	91	17.1	90	28.7	30	6.2	21.4	1
Walter Felag	10	6	1.1	4	1.3	13	2.7	1.2	29
Paul Fogarty	23	5	0.9	4	1.3	47	9.7	1.1	30
Hanna Gallo	27	6	1.1	22	7.0	4	0.8	3.3	21
Mark Gee	35	1	0.2	3	1.0			0.5	36
Gayle Goldin	3	26	4.9	12	3.8	20	4.1	4.5	18
Maryellen Goodwin	1	21	3.9	1	0.3	0	0.0	2.6	23
Paul Jabour	5	6	1.1	0	0.0	1	0.2	0.7	33
Nicholas Kettle	21	92	17.3	0	0.0	2	0.4	10.9	10
Frank Lombardi	26	138	25.9	0	0.0	1	0.2	16.3	4
Frank Lombardo	25	115	21.6	26	8.3	36	7.4	16.7	2
Erin Lynch Prata	31	2	0.4	2	0.6	4	0.8	0.5	36
Michael McCaffrey	29	11	2.1	86	27.4	12	2.5	11.5	9
Harold Metts	6	9	1.7	3	1.0	2	0.4	1.4	28
Joshua Miller	28	77	14.5	11	3.5	14	2.9	10.4	12
Elaine Morgan	34	4	0.8	1	0.3	11	1.8	0.6	34
Donna Nesselbush	15	130	24.4	11	3.5	2	0.4	16.7	2
Edward O'Neill	17	118	22.2	2	0.6	3	0.6	14.2	7
John Pagliarini	11	0	0.0					0.0	38
Teresa Paiva-Weed	13	45	8.5	0	0.0	2	0.4	5.3	17
Ryan Pearson	19	21	3.9	35	11.1	16	3.3	6.6	16
Roger Picard	20	7	1.3	1	0.3	16	3.3	0.9	31
Juan Pichardo	2	57	10.7	52	16.6	22	4.5	12.9	8
Leonidis Raptakis	33	107	20.1	31	9.9	18	3.7	16.3	4
Dominick Ruggerio	4	3	0.6	30	9.6	15	3.1	3.9	19
Adam Satchell	9	24	4.5	6	1.9	22	4.5	3.5	20
James Sheehan	36	44	8.3	19	6.1	122	25.1	7.4	14
Susan Sosnowski	37	2	0.4	12	3.8	15	3.1	1.7	25
William Walaska	30	77	14.5	14	4.5	18	3.7	10.8	11

Note: Legislation does not include resolutions and marriage solemnization bills.

Rhode Island Representatives' Missed Votes, 2014-2016

		2016		2015		2014		2015-2016	
	District	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%	%	Rank
Total votes		615		405		617			
Marvin Abney	73	9	1.5	36	8.9	10	1.6	4.4	31
Mia Ackerman	45	6	1.0	4	1.0	17	2.8	1.0	62
Edith Ajello	1	142	23.1	1	0.2	9	1.5	14.0	9
Joseph Almeida	12	95	15.4	29	7.2	62	10.0	12.2	11
Gregg Amore	65	33	5.4	0	0.0	35	5.7	3.2	33
Samuel Azzinaro	37	15	2.4	1	0.2	19	3.1	1.6	49
Jean Barros	59	37	6.0	10	2.5			4.6	28
David Bennett	20	9	1.5	3	0.7	5	0.8	1.2	53
Chris Blazejewski	2	7	1.1	10	2.5	13	2.1	1.7	46
Dennis Canario	71	63	10.2	0	0.0	33	5.3	6.2	23
John Carnevale	13	356	57.9	33	8.1	71	11.5	38.1	2
Lauren Carson	75	4	0.7	1	0.2			0.5	59
Stephen Casey	50	3	0.5	4	1.0	3	0.5	0.7	55
Michael Chippendale	40	103	16.7	15	3.7	41	6.6	11.6	10
Arthur Corvese	55	263	42.8	6	1.5	24	3.9	26.4	2
Doreen Costa	31	15	2.4	2	0.5	16	2.6	1.7	42
Gregory Costantino	44	73	11.9	13	3.2	27	4.4	8.4	14
David Coughlin	60	13	2.1	70	17.3			8.1	14
Robert Craven	32	23	3.7	6	1.5	15	2.4	2.8	27
John DeSimone	5	9	1.5	6	1.5	17	2.8	1.5	39
Grace Diaz	11	7	1.1	16	4.0	20	3.2	2.3	33
Jay Edwards	70	10	1.6	5	1.2	140	22.7	1.5	38
Deborah Fellela	43	33	5.4	22	5.4	93	15.1	5.4	18
Blake Filippi	36	45	7.3	4	1.0			4.8	20
Kathleen Fogarty	35	11	1.8	2	0.5			1.3	36
Raymond Gallison	69	2	0.3	5	1.2	11	1.8	0.7	43
Anthony Giarrusso	30	23	3.7	3	0.7	18	2.9	2.5	26
Art Handy	18	24	3.9	0	0.0	16	2.6	2.4	28
Joy Hearn	66	19	3.1	22	5.4	38	6.2	4.0	20
Raymond Hull	6	9	1.5	4	1.0	5	0.8	1.3	33
Robert Jacquard	17	157	25.5	65	16.0	79	12.8	21.8	3
Raymond Johnston	61	1	0.2	0	0.0	2	0.3	0.1	43
Katherine Kazarian	63	19	3.1	5	1.2	6	1.0	2.4	26
Cale Keable	47	4	0.7	4	1.0	11	1.8	0.8	36
Brian Kennedy	38	2	0.3	7	1.7	20	3.2	0.9	35
Robert Lancia	16	18	2.9	1	0.2			1.9	30
Charlene Lima	14	9	1.5	16	4.0	14	2.3	2.5	24

Note: Legislation does not include resolutions and marriage solemnization bills.

Rhode Island Representatives' Missed Votes, 2014-2016 (Continued)

	District	2016		2015		2014		2015-2016	
		Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%	%	Rank
John Lombardi	8	202	32.8	1	0.2	11	1.8	19.9	7
Karen MacBeth	52	89	14.5	88	21.7	61	9.9	17.4	8
Shelby Maldonado	56	6	1.0	0	0.0			0.6	68
Jan Malik	67	15	2.4	38	9.4	33	5.3	5.2	28
Mike Marcello	41	8	1.3	5	1.2	15	2.4	1.3	56
Kenneth Marshall	68	79	12.8	14	3.5	22	3.6	9.1	18
Nicholas Mattiello	15	126	20.5	0	0.0	30	4.9	12.4	11
Carol McEntee	33	8	1.3					0.0	75
Daniel McKiernan	7	31	5.0	8	2.0			3.8	34
James McLaughlin	57	19	3.1	86	21.2	20	3.2	10.3	16
Joseph McNamara	19	66	10.7	2	0.5	6	1.0	6.7	24
Helio Melo	64	6	1.0	17	4.2	42	6.8	2.3	45
Mary Messier	62	2	0.3	2	0.5	6	1.0	0.4	71
Patricia Morgan	26	59	9.6	54	13.3	11	1.8	11.1	14
Michael Morin	49	3	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.3	72
Bobby Nardolillo	28	10	1.6	2	0.5			1.2	59
Eileen Naughton	21	8	1.3	23	5.7	112	18.2	3.0	37
Brian Newberry	48	7	1.1	15	3.7	16	2.6	2.2	47
Jared Nunes	25	221	35.9	6	1.5	45	7.3	22.3	4
William O'Brien	54	52	8.5	17	4.2	16	2.6	6.8	22
Jeremiah O'Grady	46	70	11.4	30	7.4	28	4.5	9.8	17
Thomas Palangio	3	536	87.2	79	19.5	48	7.8	60.3	1
Robert Phillips	51	1	0.2	1	0.2	1	0.2	0.2	73
Justin Price	39	45	7.3	10	2.5			5.4	26
Aaron Regunberg	4	30	4.9	11	2.7			4.0	32
Daniel Reilly	72	105	17.1	8	2.0			11.1	14
Sherry Roberts	29	30	4.9	6	1.5			3.5	35
Deborah Ruggiero	74	63	10.2	6	1.5	9	1.5	6.8	22
Patricia Serpa	27	12	2.0	0	0.0	2	0.3	1.2	59
Joseph Shekarchi	23	7	1.1	5	1.2	2	0.3	1.2	59
Scott Slater	10	15	2.4	5	1.2	23	3.7	2.0	49
Joseph Solomon	22	6	1.0	0	0.0			0.6	68
Teresa Tanzi	34	11	1.8	16	4.0	30	4.9	2.6	39
Carlos Tobon	58	34	5.5	100	24.7			13.1	10
Joseph Trillo	24	209	34.0	6	1.5	13	2.1	21.1	6
Stephen Ucci	42	40	6.5	32	7.9	104	16.9	7.1	21
Anastasia Williams	9	10	1.6	15	3.7	73	11.8	2.5	41
Thomas Winfield	53	13	2.1	9	2.2	40	6.5	2.2	47

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