

Business interests killed the most number of bills in California

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee and and Chase Davis, California Watch

Business interests were the top bill killers inside California's Capitol during Gov. Jerry Brown's first year back in office, as concerns about the state's weak economy cut into labor's newfound clout.

Legislative data show business interests wielded strong influence despite a Capitol dominated by Democrats in the Legislature and the Governor's Office. Business lobbyists defeated bills that would have cut back various tax breaks, required employers to give workers unpaid bereavement leave and prolonged the foreclosure process.

In the current economy, "all legislators are more sensitive to the argument that something would be a job killer or harmful for investment or expansion," said Dorothy Rothrock, a lobbyist for the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, which represents major businesses around the state. "That's made it easier for us to stop or amend bills to make them less hostile or burdensome." Brown's first year back was good for labor unions, too. They successfully pushed bills that limit the state's ability to use private contractors, allow local governments to require union construction crews on public works projects, and reduce the use of electronic self-checkout lanes in grocery stores.

But in the tug-of-war between the Capitol's two power players, industry more than held its own. Business-related groups dominated the list of organizations with the most influence, according to a review of hundreds of bills.

The *Bee* and California Watch examined the final analyses written by legislative staff for all 906 bills introduced this year that listed supporters and opponents. For each group whose stand was registered on at least 10 bills, the news organizations tallied the number of cases in which supporters' bills were signed by the governor and opponents' bills stalled or were vetoed. Either scenario counted as a "win" for that group.

While such a tally is imperfect – it does not assess all influence exerted under the dome – it captures the outcome of the legislative year for many who carry clout at the Capitol.

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