

Brown's actions define a less liberal Calif.

By Jessica Calefati, Josh Richman and Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO – At first glance, it might seem that California lived up to its reputation for unmitigated liberalism in 2013.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed bills to let illegal immigrants get driver's licenses and practice law; raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour, the highest of any state; and make California the only state this year to increase access to abortions.

But look a little closer, and the year wasn't as far to the left as many think – or as it might've been had the Democrat-dominated Legislature and governor not reined themselves in.

Brown gave the National Rifle Association seven of the 11 vetoes it wanted, including a controversial bill to ban all semi-automatic rifles with detachable magazines. He angered many environmentalists by signing a bill to regulate, not ban, oil and natural gas fracking. And of 38 bills deemed "job killers" by the California Chamber of Commerce, only one – that minimum wage hike – made it to Brown's desk and became law.

"We saw Jerry Brown this year weave a very cautious path, carefully picking and choosing his battles," said Bruce Cain, a political science professor at Stanford University. "Any concern he has about an issue now will only intensify next year when he most likely runs for reelection."

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