

Common Cause never endorses or opposes candidates.

COMMON CAUSE SCORECARD COMPUTATIONS

Q: Who is Common Cause endorsing?
A: No one. We neither endorse nor oppose candidates. This summary reviews legislative votes on reform proposals that Common Cause believes are vital to open, ethical, accountable state government. No votes were included or omitted to help or hurt any individuals, factions or parties.

Q: How does Common Cause pick issues to count in this scorecard?
A: Board decisions shape both our lobbying and our scorecard. The Common Cause/Rhode Island State Governing Board has endorsed reforms in the areas of separation of powers, campaign finance, ethics, fiscal oversight, judicial reform, public records, open meetings, SLAPP-suits, telecommunications and voter initiative. Several votes counted in this scorecard relate to the highest Common Cause/RI priority: **ENDING THE ASSEMBLY'S PRACTICE OF APPOINTING ITS MEMBERS TO AGENCIES THAT EXECUTE THE LAWS (separation of powers).**

Q: How do legislators know where Common Cause stands?
A: Throughout the session, we distribute materials to inform legislators about issues identified by the board. Through testimony and informal lobbying, Common Cause representatives urge action on significant proposals. We also alert our grass-roots members to call their legislators on key votes.

Q: Were committee votes counted?
A: No. While committee votes are important and revealing, legislators' diverse committee assignments leave no fair way to score committee votes comparatively. In the interest of fairness, only House and Senate floor votes are counted in this scorecard.

Q: How were votes computed?
A: This scorecard reports legislators' votes on particular bills or floor amendments in the state Senate or House of Representatives. Votes that in our view helped the reform under consideration are listed as YES votes. Votes that hindered or weakened a reform count as a NO. In the attached summary, votes counted—whether on floor amendments or on final passage of a bill—are marked in bold type.

Q: What is your formula?
A: Here is the Common Cause Scorecard formula used in the charts:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Votes Common Cause considers} \\ &\text{SUPPORTIVE OF REFORM} = \text{YES votes} \\ &\text{CONTRARY TO REFORM} = \text{NO votes} \\ &\text{ABSENT OR ABSTAINING} = \text{ABS} \\ &\frac{(\text{YES votes})}{(\text{YESs} + \text{NOs} + 1/4 \text{ ABS.})} = \text{RAW SCORE} \end{aligned}$$

REPRESENTATIVE	COMMUNITY&ZIP	Dist.	Par.	YES votes	NO votes	Abs.	Raw score	Curve factor	FINAL SCORE
Bruce J. Long	Middletown 02840	95	R 12	0	2	96.0%	+ 3.5%	=	99.5%
David N. Cicilline	Providence 02906	4	D 12	1	1	90.6%	+ 7.5%	=	98.1%
Hubert E. Little	Portsmouth 02871	96	R 12	1	1	90.6%	+ 7.5%	=	98.1%
Charlene Lima	Providence 02909	13	D 10	1	3	85.1%	+ 7.5%	=	92.6%
Charles E. McDevitt	Lincoln 02865	59	D 10	1	3	85.1%	+ 7.5%	=	92.6%
Mary Lou Edith H. Walter	Westerly 02891	51	R 10	1	3	85.1%	+ 7.5%	=	92.6%
Ajello	Providence 02906	3	D 11	2	1	83.0%	+ 7.5%	=	90.5%
Francis A. Gaschen	Cumberland 02864	68	D 11	2	1	83.0%	+ 7.5%	=	90.5%
Leona A. Kelley	Peacedale 02879	49	R 11	2	1	83.0%	+ 7.5%	=	90.5%
George A. Zainyeh	Warwick 02886	35	D 11	2	1	83.0%	+ 7.5%	=	90.5%
Charles E. Millard, Jr.	Bristol 02809	90	R 9	1	4	81.8%	+ 7.5%	=	89.3%
Wayne L. Salisbury	North Scituate 02857	54	R 10	2	2	80.0%	+ 7.5%	=	87.5%
Sandra M. Barone	Barrington 02806	87	D 9	2	3	76.6%	+ 7.5%	=	84.1%
Nancy L. Benoit	Woonsocket 02895	64	D 9	2	3	76.6%	+ 7.5%	=	84.1%
Barbara C. Burlingame	Woonsocket 02895	62	D 9	2	3	76.6%	+ 7.5%	=	84.1%
Christine H. Callahan	Middletown 02840	99	R 9	2	3	76.6%	+ 7.5%	=	84.1%
Richard E. Fleury	W. Warwick 02893	40	R 10	3	1	75.5%	+ 7.5%	=	83.0%
Russell Bramley	Warwick 02886	36	D 7	1	6	73.7%	+ 7.5%	=	81.2%
William C. McGowan	Warwick 02886	37	D 8	2	4	72.7%	+ 7.5%	=	80.2%
Paul H. Archetto	Cranston 02920	21	R 9	3	2	72.0%	+ 7.5%	=	79.5%
Susan B. Iannitelli	Greenville 02828	57	R 9	3	2	72.0%	+ 7.5%	=	79.5%
Sandra J. Campbell	Foster 02825	53	R 10	4	0	71.4%	+ 7.5%	=	78.9%
Mary E. Levesque	Jamestown 02835	98	D 10	4	0	71.4%	+ 7.5%	=	78.9%
Rene R. Menard	Menard 02838	58	D 6	1	7	68.6%	+ 7.5%	=	76.1%
Leonidas P. Raptakis	Coventry 02816	31	D 6	1	7	68.6%	+ 7.5%	=	76.1%
Kenneth Brock D. Carter	N. Kingstown 02874	46	D 7	2	5	68.3%	+ 7.5%	=	75.8%
Peter T. Bierman	Cranston 02921	23	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Mark B. Ginaltt	Warwick 02889	33	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Elen A. Heffner	Barrington 02806	88	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Frank A. Kellner	Chepachet 02814	15	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Steven F. Montanaro	Cranston 02921	24	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Thomas J. Smith	Providence 02909	12	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Melvoid J. Winfield	Smithfield 02828	69	D 8	3	3	68.1%	+ 7.5%	=	75.6%
Paul E. Benson	N. Kingstown 02852	45	D 9	4	1	67.9%	+ 7.5%	=	75.4%
Thomas A. Moura	Providence 02906	2	D 9	4	1	67.9%	+ 7.5%	=	75.4%
Marguerite Palangio	Providence 02908	8	D 9	4	1	67.9%	+ 7.5%	=	75.4%
Marsha E. Bumpus	W. Kingstown 02892	52	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Steven M. Carpenter	Providence 02907	18	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Eugene F. Costantino	Providence 02903	14	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Joanne M. Garvey	Wakefield 02879	81	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Brian P. Giannini	Providence 02908	7	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Peter G. Kennedy	Ashaway 02804	16	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Elaine A. Palumbo	Cranston 02920	25	D 9	5	0	64.3%	+ 7.5%	=	71.8%
Edward S. Coelher	Pawtucket 02860	78	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Nancy C. Coelho	E. Providence 02914	85	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Edward S. Hetherington	Cranston 02905	28	R 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Beatrice A. Inman, III	Coventry 02816	41	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Joseph A. Lanzl	Cranston 02920	22	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Roger A. Lynch	Rumford 02916	82	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Antonio J. McNamara	Warwick 02888	29	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Marc C. Picard	Woonsocket 02895	66	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Robert A. Pires	Pawtucket 02861	79	D 8	4	2	64.0%	+ 7.5%	=	71.5%
Donald J. Lauzon	Woonsocket 02895	65	D 7	3	4	63.6%	+ 7.5%	=	71.1%
John J. Watson	E. Greenwich 02818	43	R 7	3	4	63.6%	+ 7.5%	=	71.1%
Anastasia P. Lally, Jr.	Wakefield 02879	48	D 6	2	6	63.2%	+ 7.5%	=	70.7%
Joseph L. McCauley, Jr.	Providence 02908	1	D 6	2	6	63.2%	+ 7.5%	=	70.7%
John V. Sherlock	Warwick 02888	30	D 6	2	6	63.2%	+ 7.5%	=	70.7%
Paul V. Williams	Providence 02907	9	D 4	0	10	61.5%	+ 7.5%	=	69.0%
Bambilyn B. Cambio	N. Providence 02911	11	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
Joseph L. Faria	Central Falls 02863	72	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
Peter F. Kilmartin	Pawtucket 02861	80	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
Maria J. Lopes	E. Providence 02914	83	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
David J. Panciera	Westerly 02891	50	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
Henry C. Rose	E. Providence 02915	84	D 8	5	1	60.4%	+ 7.5%	=	67.9%
Gordon D. Fox	Providence 02906	5	D 7	4	3	59.6%	+ 7.5%	=	67.1%
Charles Knowles	Narragansett 02882	47	D 7	4	3	59.6%	+ 7.5%	=	67.1%
Joan B. Quick	Adamsville 02801	94	R 7	4	3	59.6%	+ 7.5%	=	67.1%
Scott T. Rabideau	Harrisville 02830	60	R 7	4	3	59.6%	+ 7.5%	=	67.1%
Joseph J. Voccola	Johnston 02919	56	D 7	4	3	59.6%	+ 7.5%	=	67.1%
George A. Castro	Providence 02905	20	D 6	3	5	58.5%	+ 7.5%	=	66.0%
Jeffrey J. Teitz	Newport 02840	97	D 6	3	5	58.5%	+ 7.5%	=	66.0%
John J. Caruolo	E. Providence 02915	86	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
John J. DeSimone	Providence 02904	86	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
Suzanne M. Henseler	N. Kingstown 02852	44	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
Charles J. Levesque	Portsmouth 02871	93	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
Donald O. Reilly, Jr.	Cumberland 02864	67	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
Alfred Russo, Jr.	Johnston 02919	55	D 5	2	7	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
John S. Simonian	Cranston 02910	27	D 8	6	0	57.1%	+ 7.5%	=	64.6%
Robert E. Flaherty	Warwick 02886	34	D 7	5	2	56.0%	+ 7.5%	=	63.5%
John B. Harwood	Pawtucket 02860	76	D 7	5	2	56.0%	+ 7.5%	=	63.5%
Robert B. Jacquard	Cranston 02910	26	D 7	5	2	56.0%	+ 7.5%	=	63.5%
Eileen S. Naughton	Warwick 02889	32	D 7	5	2	56.0%	+ 7.5%	=	63.5%
William San Bento, Jr.	Pawtucket 02860	75	D 7	5	2	56.0%	+ 7.5%	=	63.5%
Peter N. Wasylyk	Providence 02909	10	D 6	4	4	54.5%	+ 7.5%	=	62.0%
Timothy A. Williamson	W. Warwick 02893	38	D 6	4	4	54.5%	+ 7.5%	=	62.0%
Mark M. Montalbano	Pawtucket 02904	74	D 7	6	1	52.8%	+ 7.5%	=	60.3%
Frank J. Anzeveno, Jr.	N. Providence 02911	70	D 5	3	6	52.6%	+ 7.5%	=	60.1%
James F. Lombardo	Warren 02885	89	D 5	3	6	52.6%	+ 7.5%	=	60.1%
James F. Towers	Tiverton 02878	92	D 5	3	6	52.6%	+ 7.5%	=	60.1%
Stephen J. Anderson	Coventry 02816	42	D 7	7	0	50.0%	+ 7.5%	=	57.5%
Mabel M. Anderson	Pawtucket 02860	77	D 7	7	0	50.0%	+ 7.5%	=	57.5%
Robert R. Brousseau	Central Falls 02863	73	D 4	2	8	50.0%	+ 7.5%	=	57.5%
Paul W. Crowley	Newport 02840	100	D 4	2	8	50.0%	+ 7.5%	=	57.5%
Robert B. Lowe	Forestdale 02824	61	D 5	4	5	48.8%	+ 7.5%	=	56.3%
William J. Murphy	W. Warwick 02893	39	D 5	4	5	48.8%	+ 7.5%	=	56.3%
Thomas C. Slater	Providence 02907	17	D 5	4	5	45.5%	+ 7.5%	=	53.0%
Harold M. Metts	Providence 02907	19	D 6	7	1	45.3%	+ 7.5%	=	52.8%
Lawrence J. Ferguson	Bristol 02809	91	D 5	6	3	42.6%	+ 7.5%	=	50.1%
Vincent J. Mesolella, Jr.	N. Providence 02904	71	D 4	6	4	36.4%	+ 7.5%	=	43.9%
Gerard M. Martineau	Woonsocket 02895	63	D 3	5	6	31.6%	+ 7.5%	=	39.1%

TOTAL VOTES/AVERAGE PERCENTAGES: 773 361 266 64.1% + 7.5% = 71.5%

Senate Scorecard

1995-96

Please see attached summaries for details.

SENATOR		COMMUNITY&ZIP	Dist.	Par.	YES votes	NO votes	Abs.	Raw score	Curve factor	FINAL SCORE	
Robin Porter	N. Kingstown 02852	23	R	14	0	0	100%	+ 0.0%	=	100.0%	
Mary A. Parella	Bristol 02809	45	R	13	0	1	98.1%	+ 0.0%	=	98.1%	
Marc A. Cote	Woonsocket 02895	31	D	12	0	2	96.0%	+ 0.0%	=	96.0%	
Roger Badeau	Woonsocket 02895	32	D	11	0	3	93.6%	+ 0.0%	=	93.6%	
Rhoda E. Perry	Providence 02906	3	D	11	0	3	93.6%	+ 0.0%	=	93.6%	
Domenic A. DiSandro, III	Saunderstown 02874	24	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
William Enos	Tiverton 02878	47	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
Charles J. Fogarty	Harmony 02829	27	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
Thomas J. Izzo	Cranston 02920	13	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
Paul S. Kelly	N. Smithfield 02895	30	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
M. Teresa Paiva-Weed	Newport 02840	49	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
Joseph M. Polisenia	Johnston 02919	28	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
William A. Walaska	Warwick 02888	17	D	13	1	0	92.9%	+ 0.0%	=	92.9%	
Michael J. McCaffrey	Warwick 02889	16	D	10	0	4	90.9%	+ 0.0%	=	90.9%	
Dennis L. Algieri	Westerly 02891	26	R	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
David E. Bates	Barrington 02806	44	R	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
J. Clement Cicilline	Newport 02840	50	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
Thomas R. Coderre	Pawtucket 02861	40	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
Sandra K. Hanaway	Cumberland 02864	33	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
Edward F. Holland	S. Kingstown 02881	6	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
William V. Irons	Rumford 02916	39	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
John C. Revens, Jr.	Warwick 02886	18	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
Eleanor C. Sasso	Cranston 02920	14	D	12	1	1	90.6%	+ 0.0%	=	90.6%	
John A. Celona	N. Providence 02904	36	D	11	1	2	88.0%	+ 0.0%	=	88.0%	
June N. Gibbs	Middletown 02840	48	R	11	1	2	88.0%	+ 0.0%	=	88.0%	
Edward J. Lawrence	Warwick 02888	15	D	11	1	2	88.0%	+ 0.0%	=	88.0%	
Helen M. Mathieu	Portsmouth 02871	46	D	11	1	2	88.0%	+ 0.0%	=	88.0%	
Frank T. Caprio	Providence 02903	8	D	9	0	5	87.8%	+ 0.0%	=	87.8%	
Michael J. Flynn	Smithfield 02829	29	R	12	2	0	85.7%	+ 0.0%	=	85.7%	
Catherine E. Graziano	Providence 02909	5	D	10	1	3	85.1%	+ 0.0%	=	85.1%	
J. Michael Lenihan	E. Greenwich 02818	22	D	10	1	3	85.1%	+ 0.0%	=	85.1%	
W. Michael Sullivan	Richmond 02892	25	R	10	1	3	85.1%	+ 0.0%	=	85.1%	
Paul J. Tavares	E. Providence 02914	42	D	10	1	3	85.1%	+ 0.0%	=	85.1%	
Michael R. DeBatt	Lincoln 02865	34	R	11	2	1	83.0%	+ 0.0%	=	83.0%	
Daniel J. Issa	Central Falls 02863	35	D	11	2	1	83.0%	+ 0.0%	=	83.0%	
John R. O'Leary	Cranston 02910	12	D	9	1	4	81.8%	+ 0.0%	=	81.8%	
James P. McStay	E. Providence 02914	43	D	7	0	7	80.0%	+ 0.0%	=	80.0%	
Leo R. Blais	Coventry 02816	21	R	11	3	0	78.6%	+ 0.0%	=	78.6%	
John M. Roney	Providence 02906	2	D	11	3	0	78.6%	+ 0.0%	=	78.6%	
Maryellen Goodwin	Providence 02908	1	D	9	2	3	76.6%	+ 0.0%	=	76.6%	
Jennie D. Day	Coventry 02816	20	D	10	3	1	75.5%	+ 0.0%	=	75.5%	
William P. Fitzpatrick	Cranston 02905	11	D	6	0	8	75.0%	+ 0.0%	=	75.0%	
Stephen D. Alves	W. Warwick 02893	19	R	7	1	6	73.7%	+ 0.0%	=	73.7%	
John F. McBurney, III	Pawtucket 02860	38	D	7	1	6	73.7%	+ 0.0%	=	73.7%	
Robert T. Kells	Providence 02907	10	D	9	3	2	72.0%	+ 0.0%	=	72.0%	
Dominic J. Ruggiero	Providence 02904	4	D	9	3	2	72.0%	+ 0.0%	=	72.0%	
Charles D. Walton	Providence 02905	9	D	6	1	7	68.6%	+ 0.0%	=	68.6%	
Bradford Gorham	Foster 02825	41	R	7	2	5	68.3%	+ 0.0%	=	68.3%	
Joseph A. Montalbano	N. Providence 02904	37	D	8	3	3	68.1%	+ 0.0%	=	68.1%	
Robert J. Palazzo	Providence 02909	7	D	6	2	6	63.2%	+ 0.0%	=	63.2%	
TOTAL VOTES/AVERAGE PERCENTAGES:					532	59	109	85.4%	+ 0.0%	=	85.4%

Q: Why are you counting only a quarter of legislators' absences?
 A: This is a part-time legislature. Many senators and representatives commit huge blocks of time to public business while working full-time. Fixed work schedules and expanding General Assembly hours — particularly toward the end of the session — always affect attendance. We also know that absences often result from other legislative responsibilities or from illness, not from inattention.

Q: Why do Representatives show lower averages than Senators?
 A: House leaders blocked floor votes on a number of reforms passed by the Senate. They also forced votes on provisions that would have resulted in dramatic set-backs for reform if they had passed the Senate. Representatives who followed their leaders on anti-reform votes may appear worse than what they would have if they had voted on the merits of the legislation. To give the benefit of the doubt to Representatives, we curved their voting totals upward by 7.5% each, except in the case of Rep. Bruce Long, whose total would have exceeded 100%.

Q: Were any other factors counted?
 A: No. Common Cause hails Representatives and Senators listed on our Honor Roll (page 7) for daring to introduce bills aimed at ending legislative appointments to Rhode Island's plethora of public and quasi-public boards. Common Cause/RI is convinced that proper Separation of Powers is the highest reform priority in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, bills that addressed this concern or sought appointment of a "blue ribbon" commission to study legislative oversight in the Federal system and in other states were all killed in committee.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As the legislature ends an unremarkable year, distinguished more by its attempts to weaken previously fought for reforms than by new or bold reform initiatives, there is certainly no sense of elation.

However, what becomes more clear with every passing session is the incontrovertible fact that without Common Cause bird-dogging bills — and sometimes sounding the alarm — serious mischief might be done.

It comes as no surprise that many in the legislature resist our call for separation of powers. But our highlighting and hammering away at this vital issue, which goes to the heart of corruption in our state, has brought the issues into sharp focus. The term "power grab," originally coined by Phil West, has been taken up by editorialists and used in news articles.

We have gained many valuable new allies, and leaders in both chambers know we will stay the course. **We will not stop until we win, and we WILL win!**

However, we need more help from our members and our friends if we are to sustain the organization and insure our effectiveness.

Will you help? We need the assistance of intelligent and responsible people to:

1. Help us build a telephone network throughout the state. (One half day per week would do the job of overseeing its development.)
2. Head up our Development Committee; or join us and bring new ideas.
3. Become a watchdog, monitoring a commission or agency for Common Cause.
4. Play a role in our communications efforts (like volunteers who produce our publications).
5. Join a new Issues Identification Committee (someone who enjoys research).

If we continue to build a strong team of activists, we can continue the fight for better, more responsive government in Rhode Island. None of us can do this alone.

Please call 861-2322, today, if you can help in any way!

Join us for our October 7th gala town meeting at the Inn at the Crossings.

Natalie

Natalie C. Joslin, President
 Rhode Island State Governing Board

SPECIAL THANKS!

Thanks to staff at the Secretary of State's office, at the State House Library and at Legislative Data Services for their assistance to Common Cause and others who gather information about the legislative process!

Thanks to Providence Journal-Bulletin cartoonist Jim Bush for permission to reprint his work.

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SCORECARD: VOTES TALLIED BY COMMON CAUSE

NOTE: Votes counted in the Scorecard where lawmakers differed are outlined here. Several additional reforms where final votes were virtually unanimous are not listed.

RABIES CONTROL BOARD CAUGHT IN LEGISLATIVE POWER GRAB.

Governor Lincoln C. Almond cast his first veto on June 14, 1995, because the bill (95-S 867), did more than address the spread of rabies in Rhode Island. Along with added powers to enforce quarantine and clarify local responsibilities, Sen. William Enos, D-Tiverton, fattened the Rabies Control Board from seven to nine members. The two additional appointees -- both lawmakers -- were to be named by the Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House.

"While the substance of the bill is meritorious," Almond wrote in his veto message, "there is a serious constitutional separation of powers question associated with adding legislators to a board exercising executive enforcement powers. Legislative power is the power to make laws, but not to enforce them or appoint the agents charged with the duty of such enforcement."

Common Cause urged Senators and Representatives to sustain the veto, but the Senate overrode in a partisan 32-11 vote. Across the rotunda House Republicans were joined by five Democrats joined in an effort that was crushed 64-14.

SPEAKER REACHES FOR THIRD SOLID WASTE APPOINTMENT.

Rep. Joseph J. Voccola, D-Johnston, introduced bill aimed at adding a Johnston resident to the Solid Waste Management Corporation board. Voccola's bill (96-H 7285) would have lopped off one gubernatorial appointee and added one more Speaker's choice, an increase from two to three members of the nine-member board. House Republicans offered a floor amendment to restore the Governor's appointive power but were crushed by a vote of 65-11. After overwhelming House passage, Common Cause lobbied the Senate Corporations Committee for an amendment to restore the Governor's appointive power. Sen. William Irons, D-E.Providence, moved the amendment, and the Senate passed the amended bill unanimously 46-0.

Footnote: later in the session, lawmakers renamed the trash authority: RHODE ISLAND RESOURCE RECOVERY CORPORATION.

HOUSE SCUTTLES PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF ETHICS COMMISSIONERS.

For the fourth successive year, representatives were prevented from debating or voting on the need for public confirmation of appointees to the Ethics Commission.

Both Governor Lincoln C. Almond and former Governor Bruce G. Sundlun made legally flawed appointments to the Ethics Commission. Sundlun's nomination wound up in court; Almond's withdrew quietly. At Common Cause request, Senate Majority Leader Paul S. Kelly, D-N.Smithfield, introduced a bill (96-S 2346) to establish public confirmation of nominees to the nation's most powerful ethics panel. Sen. Kelly's bill won unanimous Senate passage, 38-0, in February, then languished in the House Judiciary Committee until July 25. With vigorous lobbying from Common Cause, members of the House Judiciary voted unanimously for passage by the full House. Then the bill vanished, never to appear on the House Calendar.

Both House Speaker John B. Harwood and Majority Leader George D. Caruolo have commented that members of the ethics panel should be confirmed by the House and Senate, as are justices of the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

REPS REJECT EFFORT TO SLASH FINES FOR ETHICS VIOLATIONS

Rank-and-file representatives blocked an attempt to drop maximum fines levied by the Ethics Commission from \$25,000 to \$5,000. Larger fines would have been allowed only for "flagrant" violations approved by six of the nine commission members. Rep. Scott T. Rabideau, R-Burrillville, sponsored the bill (96-H 7453) and promoted it in the House Judiciary Committee.

Opponents, including Reps. Frank Gaschen, D-Cumberland, David Cicilline, D-Providence, and Bruce Long, R-Middletown, argued that Rabideau's bill was unneeded and would send the wrong message. Although Speaker John B. Harwood, D-Pawtucket, House Majority Leader George D. Caruolo, D-E.Providence, and House Minority Leader Wayne Salisbury, R-Scituate, voted for Rabideau's bill, it was defeated on the House floor by a vote 52-33.

SLAPP-SUIT PROTECTION FOLLOWS COURT RULING AND VETO.

Citizens who petition government became less vulnerable to retaliatory lawsuits with enactment of anti-SLAPP-suit legislation over a 1995 veto by Gov. Lincoln C. Almond. SLAPP is an acronym for Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation.

Sen. Domenic A. DiSandro, III, D-Narragansett, sponsored anti-SLAPP legislation (95-S 675) after a Superior Court judge refused to dismiss a 1992 defamation suit against Saunderson resident Nancy Hsu Fleming who complained to the state Department of Environmental Management that toxins from a local landfill were seeping into the town's water supply. The dump owners demanded that she withdraw her charges. When she refused, they sued. Sen. John M. Roney, D-Providence, and Rep. Suzanne M. Henseler, D-N.Kingstown, filed similar measures.

DiSandro's bill passed the Senate, 46-0, and the House, 95-2, only to be vetoed in spite of strong support by Attorney General Jeffrey B. Pine. Both chambers overrode the veto: the Senate with a vote of 36-6, the House by 62-9.

OPTICAL SCAN VOTING EQUIPMENT APPROVED TOO LATE FOR 1996 ELECTION.

With the passage of a key bill on Optical Scan Voting (96-S 2426) on July 31, the General Assembly authorized the replacement of obsolete mechanical voting machines with state-of-the-art optical scanners. The new technology, which reads marked ballots by computer, is faster and more accurate than mechanical methods. Provisions of the bill insure both voter privacy and efficient recounts when necessary.

Secretary of State James Langevin promoted the legislation, which was sponsored by Sen. Domenic DiSandro, D-Narragansett. After delays that ruled out use of the new technology this fall, the Optical Scan bill won nearly universal support in both houses, passing 37-0 in the Senate and 75-4 in the House.

HOUSE BACKS AUTONOMY AT NARRAGANSETT BAY COMMISSION. SENATE DEMURS.

Common Cause opposed legislation (96-H 8400) introduced by Rep. Wayne L. Salisbury, that would have exempted the powerful sewage disposal agency from jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission and state Controller. It would have exempted the NBC from significant state fiscal controls without restricting the unique executive powers of its Chairman, Rep. Vincent J. Meselella, Jr., D-N.Providence. Meselella also serves as Deputy House Majority Whip. With major problems still unresolved, the House approved the bill: 66-21. The Senate Finance Committee had earlier rejected

a less aggressive NBC autonomy proposal.

Footnote: Operation Clean Government identified \$21,775 in campaign contributions Meselella accepted from employees of twenty-three NBC vendors between 1993 and 1995. The Providence Journal-Bulletin has tagged him Rhode Island's "reigning king of conflict."

UNDERGROUND TANK AGENCY ELECTS MEOLELLA, SEEKS MORE FUNDS.

Legislation introduced on July 18, 1996 by House Majority Leader George D. Caruolo, D-E.Providence, sought to increase annual administrative costs for this public board headed by the Deputy House Majority Whip from \$150,000 to \$240,000 per year. The bill (96-H 9311) would have authorized greater expenditures from a penny-per-gallon gasoline tax that has raised \$7.2 million so far in Rhode Island even though the thirteen-member board has reportedly done little beside electing Rep. Vincent J. Meselella, Jr., as its Chairman. Reformers in the house were unable to block passage by a vote of 63-17, but the Senate, which received the bill on July 31 sent it to committee, where it died.

SENATE PASSES "ROLL-OVER" CHAMP ON DISCLOSURE. HOUSE RECOMMITS.

Senate Minority Leader Michael J. Flynn, R-Smithfield, introduced a bill (96-S 3212) aimed to make public the education courses taken by state employees that led to incentive pay and higher pensions. Governor Lincoln C. Almond, Attorney General Jeffrey B. Pine and General Treasurer Nancy J. Mayer had requested the legislation.

Under fire from public employee union lobbyists, Flynn's bill was repeatedly postponed. Flynn dubbed his bill "the roll-over champion of the session."

The Senate finally debated its central questions of employee privacy and the public's right to know. An amendment that would have required disclosure only of courses taken in the future failed by a vote of 9-32. Then the bill passed 37-4. "The public has a right to know," said retiring Sen. James P. McStay, D-E.Providence, during the debate. "This is not a witch hunt. This has to happen for the state to move forward."

A parallel House bill (96-H 8963) by Minority Leader Wayne L. Salisbury, R-Scituate, was also postponed repeatedly. On August 1, House Majority Leader George D. Caruolo, D-E.Providence, moved to recommit the disclosure measure to committee. His motion carried, 53-13.

SMALL STEPS TOWARD MORE OPEN GOVERNMENT.

While neither the 1995 or 1996 sessions brought break-throughs in the area of open meetings, legislation aimed at closing loopholes in the Rhode Island's Open Meetings Law was enacted. Rep. Beatrice A. Lanzi, D-Cranston, pushed successfully for passage of a bill (95-H 5394) that requires all public bodies to keep minutes and to file copies with the Secretary of State within 35 days.

Rep. Charles J. Levesque, D-Portsmouth, sponsored legislation (95-H 5442) to outlaw Open Meeting evasions under the guise of a political party caucus. Representatives approved the Lanzi and Levesque bills by votes of 89-0 and 90-0. Senators followed through: 42-0 and 45-1.

Although both measures became law, many local boards and commissions are not filing minutes as required under the Lanzi bill. Common Cause is working with other reform groups to push for universal compliance.