



Beacon Hill Compliance Tracker

Measuring Massachusetts Legislative Transparency

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Anatomy of Non-Compliance, #4: Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Recurring hiatuses drive a lack of deadline accountability

Introduction

This brief examines the Joint Committee on the Judiciary as measured by the Tracker as of February 22, 2026 in the 194th General Court (2025–26). The Judiciary handles the largest docket of any Joint Committee at 780 bills this session, handling complex matters such as criminal justice, courts, and civil rights. With this large workload comes the largest non-compliant bill count by raw number of any committee. Fewer than 7 out of every 100 bills handled by the Judiciary complies with all the Joint Rules which the Tracker follows.

I. Committee Overview

	House	Senate
Chair	Michael Day	Lydia Edwards
Vice Chair	Brandy Fluker-Reid	James Eldridge
Compliance Rate	6.67%	
Total Bills	780	
Summary Violations	52	
Report-Out Violations	458	
Notice Violations	218	
Vote Violations	640	

Though the largest violation mode by number is lack of posted votes, the main driver of non-compliance is actually in the form of missed reporting deadlines, which often then triggers an additional “vote missing” violation (since both trigger due to lateness). This report explores the various ways which late report-outs affect citizens’ civic participation and cascade into other kinds of lapses in accountability.

II. Pattern Analysis

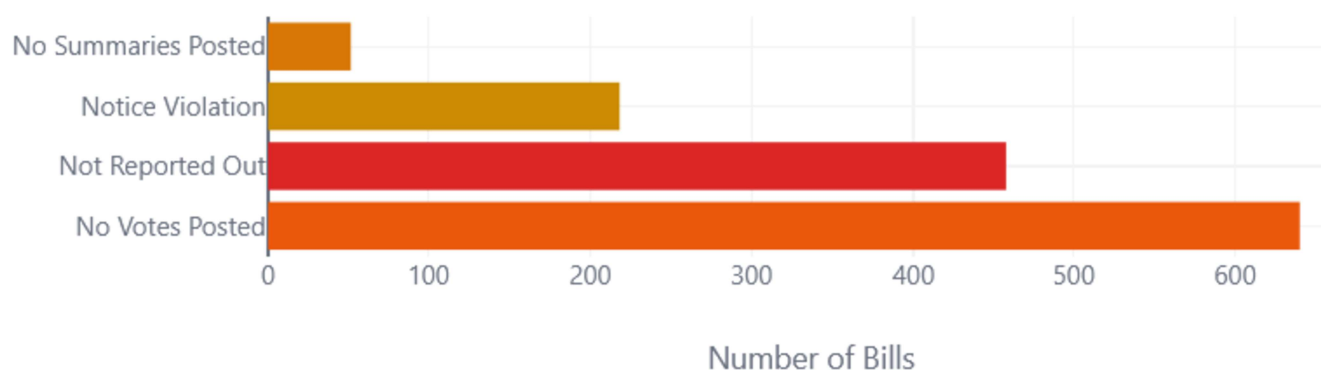


Figure 1: Instances of non-compliance by violation type and bill count

As mentioned in the introduction, the violation type which best characterizes the overall non-compliance of the Judiciary is missed reporting deadlines. When browsing the Judiciary's page on the Tracker, it's not uncommon to see bill rows which look like this:

Joint Committee on the Judiciary	Non-Compliant	✓	✓	✓	11
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Figure 2: A bill which seems compliant across the board despite the "Non-Compliance" rating.

At a glance, this may seem like a bug; every requirement has a green check-mark, and hearing notice is adequate. However, this is a true violation, because, though the bill was reported out, it was late. For example, S.1248, "An Act codifying organizational standing to protect and promote civil rights", was referred to the Judiciary on February 27th of 2025, meaning the deadline to report out was December 3rd of 2025 (per the Joint Rules).

This pattern of long-delayed action and lapses in deadline accountability plays out commonly:

- S.1175, "An Act prohibiting injurious operations or offering services or products that discriminate against or injure protected classes"
- S.1246, "An Act to add sex and gender as protected classes for crime prosecutions"
- S.1249, "An Act prohibiting body size discrimination"
- S.1181, "An Act establishing a commission to study reparations in Massachusetts"
- S.1126, "An Act relative to combating hate in the Commonwealth"

Each of these bills was weeks to months late reporting out, even given a year to do so.

Outside of late report-outs, many bills lack reports entirely despite being well past the deadline. Each of these cases is more than a month late (and counting) as of the time of writing:

- H.1647, “An Act to improve enforcement of environmental quality”
- H.1954, “An Act ensuring access to equitable representation in immigration proceedings”
- H.1683, “An Act to strengthen justice and support for sex trade survivors”
- H.1805, “An Act to enhance the authority of courts to protect public safety”
- H.1893, “An Act to stop profiling transgender people and low-income women”

The Joint Rules were passed, in large part, to hinder this exact sort of opacity: a lack of action which deprives the public of knowing where exactly their legislators stand on these issues. Without reporting these bills out of committee with a decision, they stall forever. Without votes documenting action taken, legislators’ actions never make it on the record.

III. Workflow Hypothesis

Based on the various timeline-related failure modes, the Judiciary appears to operate on an informal timeline that ignores formal deadlines. The committee grants itself repeated extensions, reports bills out late regardless of deadline status, and processes bills at an internal, opaque convenience. This creates a rolling backlog where deadline compliance is frequently disregarded and lateness is the norm, not the exception.

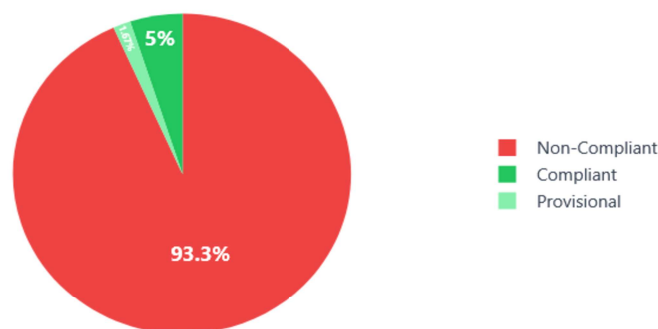


Figure 3: Pie chart showing 100% non-compliance with at least one rule

The missing votes (640) are largely a downstream consequence: when deadlines are missed or extended repeatedly, the formal reporting requirements (including posted votes) get overlooked in the delayed process. The committee may be deliberating substantively, but it’s doing so outside the accountability framework the rules established in 2025.

The result: citizens can’t predict or reliably track when decisions will be made, or reliably find documentation of what was decided, even if the committee eventually acts.

The Judiciary treats deadlines as suggestions, not requirements, and citizens lose access to knowing where their representatives and senators stand on key issues.

IV. The Gap

When the Judiciary misses reporting deadlines or extends them indefinitely, constituents lose their ability to track bills that directly affect their lives—criminal justice, the courts, and civil rights are all stalled, buried, and undocumented for months on end. The predictability that deadlines create isn't bureaucratic pedantry; it's what allows citizens to participate meaningfully. When deadlines become optional, transparency becomes accidental.

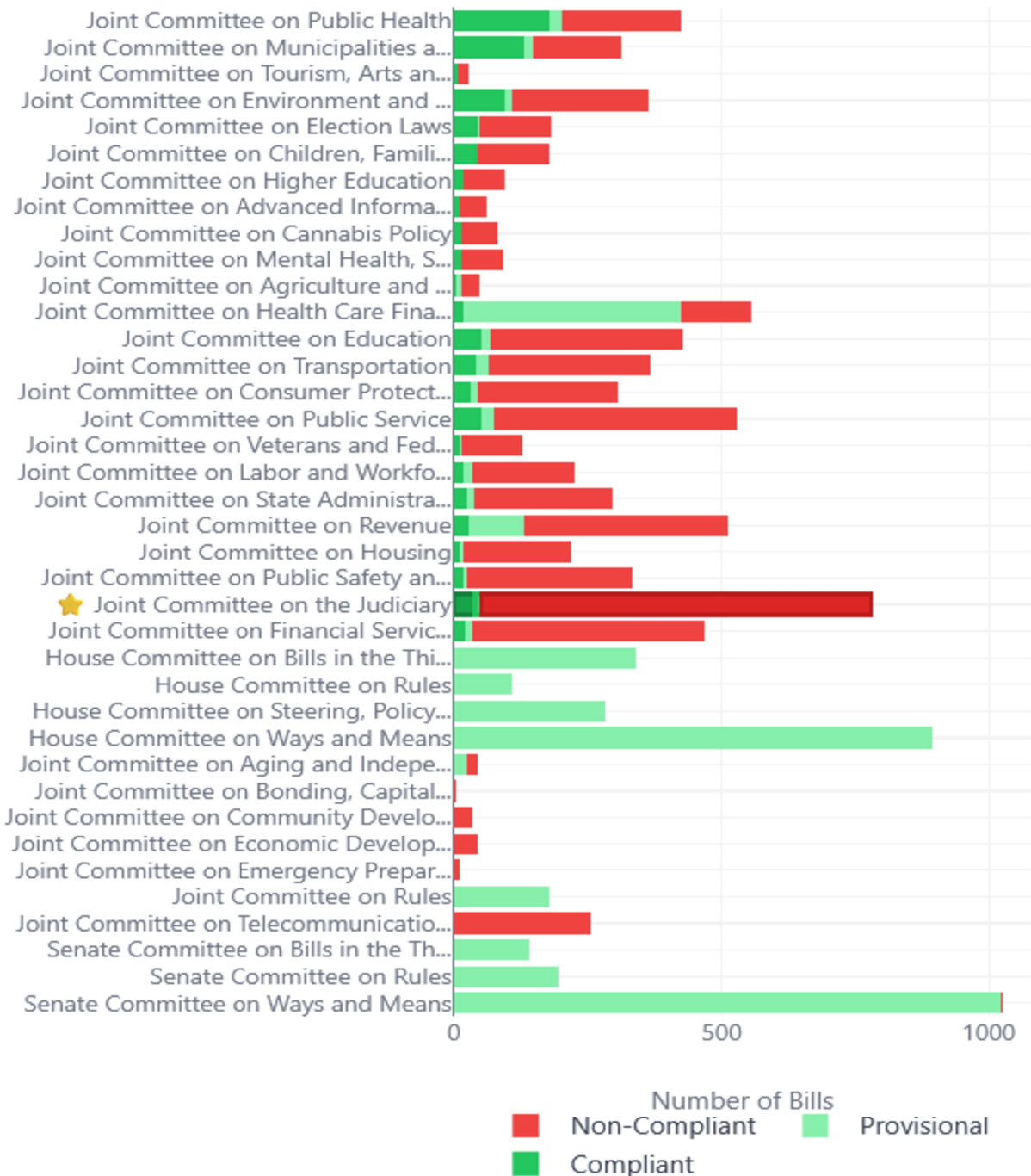


Figure 4: Comparison chart demonstrating the Judiciary's comparatively large number of non-compliant bills.

V. Accountability Context

	House	Stipend	Senate	Stipend
Chair	Michael Day	\$44,862	Lydia Edwards	\$44,862
Vice Chair	Brandy Fluker-Reid	\$22,431	James Eldridge	\$7,776

Policy Area AI, corporate transparency, internet gaming & sports gambling, climate tech
Time Range June 2025 - Present
of Violations

The chairs and vice chairs of the Judiciary cumulatively receive \$119,931 for holding these positions. The violations recorded by the Tracker for this committee span the full 194th session, and indicate consistent evidence of legacy workflows which have not been amended in light of the new Joint Rules implemented in 2025, specifically regarding timelines at the tail end of a bill's tenure within the committee.

Analysis based on bill-level metadata scraped from official public legislative sources as of February 22, 2026 using version 1.4.0 of the Tracker and version 1.0.5 of Stipends. Deadline compliance is computed using a chronology-based algorithm applied consistently across all cases; irregularities in the underlying data make the resulting values standardized estimates rather than exact measures.

For further information collected by the Beacon Hill Compliance Tracker, please visit <https://beaconhilltracker.org/>.

For further information collected by Beacon Hill Stipends, please visit <https://beaconhillstipends.org/>.

For further questions, please contact info@beaconhilltracker.org.