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## OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 296 (File 651, as amended by Senate "A")\*

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION WITH RESPECT TO THE CONNECTICUT UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES ACT AND SPORTS WAGERING.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes related to Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA) violations and records, the crime of cheating, and certain gaming violations.

The bill expands when the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) can require restitution after finding a CUTPA violation. Currently, DCP may do so in cases involving up to \$10,000. The bill expands this to cases involving up to \$25,000 per consumer.

It also changes how long DCP or the attorney general can withhold records about CUTPA investigations from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Currently, these records can be withheld for the lesser of 18 months from the filing of a complaint or from the start of an investigation. The bill instead permits withholding these records until the investigation closes (§ 1).

The bill expands the crime of cheating to include when a person, to gain an advantage for himself, herself, or another person:

1. intentionally attempts to change the results of a sports wager's outcome through a promise or offer of an advantage or benefit to another person or
2. solicits or accepts for himself, herself, or another person an advantage, benefit, or the promise or offer of one, with intent to change the results of a sports wager's outcome.

In both circumstances, the wager or the conduct must occur in

Connecticut (§ 3). The bill makes this, as with most other forms of cheating, a class D felony (punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both) (see BACKGROUND).

The bill specifies certain actions the attorney general can take related to online gaming and sports wagering at the DCP commissioner's request. Currently, the DCP commissioner can ask the attorney general to seek restraining orders and injunctions in court to stop violations of these laws. The bill also allows the attorney general, at the commissioner's request, to seek these court orders and other court relief to stop someone from offering or advertising sports wagering services to state residents without a license. However, this does not:

1. apply to newspaper, periodical, radio, or television advertising where the publisher, owner, agent, or employee did not know it was false, misleading, unfair, or deceptive and did not have a financial interest in the advertised product or service or
2. limit the commissioner's or attorney general's other rights and remedies (§ 4).

The bill also specifies that online gaming is online casino gaming or online sports wagering for purposes of criminal penalties for allowing an underage person to open an account or place wagers (§ 2). As under current law, a violation is a class C misdemeanor (punishable by up to three months in prison, a fine of up to \$500, or both).

\*Senate Amendment "A" adds the provision about newspaper, periodical, radio, or television advertising for purposes of court actions related to online gaming and sports wagering.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the CUTPA restitution and cheating provisions are effective October 1, 2026.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **CUTPA**

By law, CUTPA prohibits businesses from engaging in unfair and deceptive acts or practices. It allows the DCP commissioner, under

specified procedures, to issue regulations defining an unfair trade practice, investigate complaints, issue cease and desist orders, order restitution in certain cases, impose civil penalties of up to \$5,000, enter into consent agreements, ask the attorney general to seek injunctive relief, and accept voluntary statements of compliance. It also allows individuals to sue. Courts may issue restraining orders; award actual and punitive damages, costs, and reasonable attorney's fees; and impose civil penalties of up to \$5,000 for willful violations and up to \$25,000 for a restraining order violation.

***Cheating***

Under existing law, cheating includes:

1. knowingly using an altered or counterfeit item, or knowingly tampering with cards or dice or substituting cards or dice for ones provided by the game operator;
2. knowingly using a device or substance intending to cheat or change the random results of a game of chance; or
3. intentionally placing or changing a wager after the time permitted to place it or after the game results are known.

Cheating is a class D felony, except that placing or changing wagers after the time permitted or after results are known is a class B misdemeanor (punishable by up to six months in prison, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 0 (03/30/2026)