
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 475 (File 653, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS.

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SUMMARY

This bill makes various unrelated changes in laws on court procedures and operations. It also makes various technical and conforming changes. A section-by-section analysis follows.

*Senate Amendment "A" (1) adds the provisions on (a) annual submission of judicial candidates to the governor, legislative leaders, and Judiciary Committee leadership; (b) the habeas corpus task force's reporting deadline; (c) federal judges being added to the list of individuals who may ask to have personal information removed from agency websites or not published; and (d) Inmate Trust Account balance disbursement; (2) strikes a provision in the underlying bill that narrows the circumstances under which a probation officer must seek a warrant and notify police about a serious firearm offender's probation violation; (3) restricts the capital improvement cap increase under the underlying bill to the judicial branch, instead of also including the state constituent units of higher education; and (4) in certain proceedings, sets a 14-day deadline to object to an arbitrator's continued appointment after the parties are notified the arbitrator is no longer in good standing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, unless stated otherwise below.

§§ 1 & 2 — JUDICIAL BRANCH CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Increases, from \$500,000 to \$3 million, the expense cap on making judicial branch capital improvements without DAS prior approval

Current law caps at \$500,000 the cost of repairs, alterations, or additions to state buildings and premises under the supervision of the Office of the Chief Court Administrator (OCCA, which manages the judicial branch's operations), including entering into contracts for the work, that may occur without the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) commissioner's approval. The bill (1) increases the expense cap to \$3 million and (2) makes a conforming change to the DAS commissioner's duties for administering capital improvements, which currently require her oversight for judicial branch improvements with consultant services costing more than \$750,000.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the conforming change to the commissioner's duties is effective October 1, 2026.

§ 3 — DISPOSING OF UNCLAIMED PROPERTY

Requires OCCA to establish a procedure for the judicial branch to dispose of unclaimed detainee property

The bill requires OCCA to establish a procedure for selling or disposing of unclaimed detainee property, including clothing and jewelry, after a reasonable effort to return it to its owner. All sale proceeds must be deposited in the General Fund and credited to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund, which pays for compensation services for crime victims.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 4 — CONNECTICUT BAR FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT

Pushes back, from July 1 to September 30, the deadline for CBF to report to the Judiciary Committee about the temporary restraining order legal assistance program's impact

The bill pushes back, from July 1 to September 30, the deadline for the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF), as administrator of the grant program that provides free legal assistance to indigent people seeking temporary restraining orders, to submit a report to the Judiciary Committee on the program's impact. (By law, for each year that the program gets funding, CBF must (1) have an analysis done on its impact

for the previous year, including information about procedural outcomes and the legal services provided, and (2) report the results of the analysis to the committee.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 5 — FAMILY VIOLENCE RESPONSE AND INTERVENTION UNITS

Requires the judicial branch to inform DCF about progress on, and compliance with, court-ordered intervention and services when there are open cases in both the branch's family violence intervention unit and DCF; consolidates and broadens authorized disclosures related to defendants' supervision and service needs

The law requires the judicial branch, through its Court Support Services Division (CSSD), to have a family violence intervention unit in each geographical area court to respond to family violence cases. The units prepare reports on each case for the court, provide or arrange for victim and offender services (including referrals to counselors who deliver trauma-informed care), and contract for these services.

Generally, the information the units receive is confidential, but it must be disclosed for certain purposes. One required disclosure is to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if a defendant is a danger or threat to a child or the child's custodial parent. The bill also requires disclosure to DCF about progress and compliance with court-ordered intervention and services when there are open cases in both the family violence intervention unit and DCF. But this information must only be used for child protection services and not in any other court proceeding unless another law allows it.

The bill also generally consolidates four authorized disclosures. Currently, the below information may be disclosed as follows:

1. information allowed under chief court administrator-adopted guidelines may be shared with specified employees (a family relations counselor or trainee or family services supervisor);
2. information about a defendant on, or being considered for, pretrial release may be shared with a bail commissioner or a judicial branch intake, assessment, and referral specialist;

3. information about a defendant convicted and sentenced to probation in a family violence case may be shared with a probation officer to determine service needs and supervision levels; and
4. information about a defendant convicted in a family violence case may be shared with a probation officer to prepare a presentence investigation report.

Consolidating and broadening them, the bill allows for disclosure to another CSSD employee all files and reports about the defendant to (1) determine whether to recommend pretrial release; (2) prepare a presentence investigation report or a pre-dispositional study; (3) determine supervision and service needs, for both before a trial and after conviction; and (4) monitor and enforce release or probation conditions. The disclosure must be authorized by the CSSD executive director or a division designee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 6 & 7 — JUVENILE MATTERS & PROCEEDINGS

Requires the court, when placing a child or youth in a protective supervision custody arrangement, to include specific steps for the parent to keep the child or youth in the parent's custody; eliminates outdated procedural court requirements for parentage acknowledgements; makes conforming changes to reflect that a person may be related by law, instead of only by blood or marriage

By law, when the court decides in a commitment or custody proceeding that a child's or youth's care should be assigned to someone other than his or her parent, parents, or former guardian, the court must order specific steps that must be taken to help return the child or youth to the parent's custody. If the court orders placement with the parent under DCF protective supervision (meaning that DCF oversees the arrangement and the court sets conditions), the bill similarly requires the order to specify steps that must be taken to keep a child or youth in the parent's custody.

By law, an alleged genetic parent in a case involving a petition for a neglected, uncared for, or abused child or youth may sign a paternity acknowledgement. The bill eliminates outdated procedural

requirements, specifically that the documents be executed and filed in line with an obsolete statutory chapter and sent to the Department of Public Health (DPH) for inclusion in the parentage registry. (Under current practice, the court does not participate in DPH's voluntary parentage establishment program.) It instead requires that the parent use a form that the court provides and that DPH creates.

The bill also makes several conforming changes to juvenile matters provisions to reflect the state's adoption of the Connecticut Parentage Act (PA 21-15) and that a person may be related by law, instead of only by blood or marriage.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 8 — JUVENILE TRANSFER TO ADULT CRIMINAL COURT

Makes a conforming change to the statute that generally prohibits children from being prosecuted in adult court

The bill adds a conforming reference to the statute that generally prohibits children from being prosecuted in adult court (the regular criminal docket) to reflect an exception in existing law that allows children to be tried in adult court when the case involves a serious homicide, firearm, or sexual offender prosecution.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 9 — SENTENCING HEARING TRANSCRIPTS

Eliminates the requirement that prosecutors request certain sentencing hearing transcripts on the record

Existing law requires prosecutors to request transcripts of sentencing hearings for cases with a definite, non-suspended sentence of at least two years. The bill eliminates the requirement that the request be made on the record. This conforms to judicial branch practice, which requires all attorneys, unless exempt from the branch's electronic services requirements, to use the branch's online transcript ordering system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 10 — PEER SUPPORT TEAM LIABILITY

Immunizes (1) an employer for having a peer support program to benefit first responders and (2) a peer support team member from liability for performing peer support services

By law, communications between a first responder and a peer support team member are generally confidential. A “peer support team member” is someone who directs or staffs an employer-established peer support program for first responders. First responders include, among others, peace officers, firefighters, ambulance drivers, EMTs, and Department of Correction (DOC) employees.

The bill immunizes employers from damages for setting up or maintaining a peer support program for their first responder employees. It also immunizes peer support team members from liability for their or their team’s acts, errors, or omissions made when providing peer support services for a first responder’s benefit (including deciding if it is appropriate to disclose confidential communications). However, this liability protection does not apply to wanton, reckless, or malicious conduct.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 11 — ANNUAL JUDICIAL CANDIDATE LIST REPORTING

Annually requires JSC to submit its list of incumbent judges and qualified candidates to the governor, six legislative leaders, and Judiciary Committee’s chairpersons and ranking members

By law, the Judicial Selection Commission (JSC) maintains a list of qualified candidates, including judges seeking appointment to a different court, for the governor’s consideration for nomination as a judge in the state’s Superior, Appellate, and Supreme courts. Candidates are placed on the list after an evaluation of their qualifications.

The bill annually requires, by January 1, JSC to submit its list of incumbent judges and qualified candidates to the governor, six legislative leaders (Senate president pro tempore, House speaker, and House and Senate majority and minority leaders), and Judiciary Committee’s chairpersons and ranking members. Under the bill, this list is confidential; it is not open to the public or subject to disclosure.

§§ 12 & 13 — PRETRIAL DIVERSIONARY PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES AND VETERANS

Requires program applicants who live outside of Connecticut to return to the state for mental health assessment; requires program participants to be classified based on risk level for supervisory and monitoring purposes; allows, instead of requires, CSSD to consult with DMHAS when developing standards, overseeing treatment programs, and contracting with service providers

By law, CSSD operates a supervised diversionary program for people with psychiatric disabilities and veterans with mental health conditions who are accused of crimes that are not considered serious. A prospective participant must apply to the court to participate in the program, and the court refers the applicant to CSSD to determine eligibility and assess the person's mental health condition. Under the bill, if the applicant lives outside of Connecticut, he or she must return to the state as CSSD requires for the mental health assessment.

Existing law allows the court to grant a person's application to participate in the program after it confirms eligibility and considers the proposed treatment plan. Participants are supervised by a probation officer. The bill also, for supervision and monitoring purposes, requires the participants to be classified based on the level of risk they pose to the community, using the chief court administrator's existing system for doing this.

For the diversionary program, current law requires CSSD to develop standards and oversee treatment programs and allows it to contract with service providers, but all of this must be done in consultation with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). The bill instead gives CSSD discretion to consult with DMHAS.

§ 14 — JUVENILE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Allows the court to order a risk and needs assessment of an arrested child when it has found probable cause that the child committed the acts alleged

By law, a child arrested for a delinquent act must generally be brought before a Superior Court judge within five business days after their arrest. At that time, if the court finds probable cause to believe that the child committed the acts alleged, current law allows it to consider whether the child should be assessed for services. The bill specifically

allows the court to order a risk and needs assessment to determine if the child could benefit from services. It also requires that the assessment generally be confidential, as the law already requires for a child's risk or mental or behavioral health screening.

Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, the (1) assessment must occur within two weeks after the child's arraignment and (2) child has the right to counsel at the assessment.

A "risk and needs assessment" is a standardized tool that (1) helps juvenile probation officers collect and synthesize information about a child's recidivism risk and identify other factors that, if treated and changed, can reduce the likelihood of reoffending and (2) serves as a guide for intervention planning.

§ 15 — REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Eliminates an annual reporting requirement for CSSD on out-of-school suspensions of children living in its residential facilities

The bill removes a requirement that CSSD annually report to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee on its compliance with the law that prohibits CSSD-operated facilities from giving children living at the facilities out-of-school suspensions. (In practice, CSSD does not (1) provide or contract for education services at its residential centers or programs or (2) make decisions about these suspensions.) Existing law, unchanged by the bill, also requires DOC to report on this information.

§ 16 — STUDENT EDUCATION RECORDS

Requires DCF, instead of the judicial branch, to inform the applicable board of education when a child is placed in a juvenile residential center

The bill transfers, from the judicial branch to DCF, responsibility for notifying the local or regional board of education when a child is placed in a juvenile residential center.

By law, the written notice must go to the board that would otherwise be responsible for educating the child, or if there is not one, to the board for the school district where the juvenile residential center is located. It must have all necessary information to give the child educational

services, including name and birthdate, parents' or guardians' address, and placement contact information.

Current law requires the judicial branch to send the notice within one business day after the child's placement. Under the bill, DCF must send the notice immediately upon placement, in line with its existing requirements to request the transfer of previous school records for students placed in juvenile justice facilities or incarcerated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

§ 17 — INVALIDATING FALSE LIENS

Allows the court to discharge a falsely filed lien without a hearing

Existing law sets out a process by which a person may ask the court to invalidate a lien that is falsely filed on the municipal land records.

By law, the court must review the petition and determine if there is reason to doubt the filing's validity. Current law requires the court to have a hearing, within 60 days after finding that there is reason to doubt it, to decide if the filing should be invalidated or other relief granted.

The bill allows the court to decide the matter without a hearing. It specifies that the court may base its decision on documents submitted with the petition and any responses from the person who is listed as the lienor (lien holder) on the land records. And the court need not hear oral testimony unless the lienor offers it.

§ 18 — JUDICIAL BRANCH OFFICIAL SEAL

Restricts the use of the judicial branch's official seal and imitations of it

The bill prohibits using the judicial branch's official seal, including imitations of it through a reproduction, imprint, or facsimile, without the chief court administrator's direction and approval. It also generally restricts the seal's use to purposes (1) authorized by the state's constitution and statutes or (2) related to the judicial branch's official business. The bill allows the chief court administrator to approve other seal reproductions for educational purposes.

By law, a similar restriction applies to using the official arms and seal

of Connecticut, with the secretary of the state having the authority to direct and approve of its use.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 19 & 20 — VICTIM SERVICES

Expands the circumstances under which crime victims may be compensated for emotional harm; allows the chief court administrator to designate someone to set (1) policies and procedures to implement victim services and (2) standards to uniformly pay claims

The bill makes two changes to victim services-related laws.

First, it expands the circumstances under which certain crime victims may be compensated for personal injury, including emotional harm. Under current law, eligible “emotional harm” is a mental or emotional impairment directly attributable to a threat of physical injury or death. The bill broadens it to also include mental or emotional impairment caused by intentional or knowing actions that would make a reasonable person fear for their safety. By law, compensation for emotional harm is limited to medical and mental health care and security measures, generally capped at \$5,000.

Second, current law requires the chief court administrator to prescribe any necessary policies and procedures to implement victim services and allows her to formulate standards for uniformly paying compensation claims. The bill allows her to designate someone to do these tasks.

§ 21 — SUPPORT ORDERS

Specifies that a support order ends and the parties to it are jointly liable for ongoing family expenses if the parties marry

The bill specifies that in cases where the parties to a preexisting child support order marry each other, the marriage ends the order, and they are jointly liable for ongoing family support, as existing law requires of all spouses to support their family. This codifies existing practice.

§§ 22 & 23 — LAW LIBRARY REGULATIONS REPEAL

Repeals obsolete regulations for state law libraries

The bill (1) repeals obsolete regulations for state law libraries and (2)

requires the secretary of the state to update the official compilation of state agency regulations on the eRegulations System by October 1, 2026, to reflect the repeal.

These regulations set minimum standards for the state law libraries three-tier system, which PA 90-234 eliminated. That act instead requires the Connecticut Supreme Court to adopt policies and procedures for maintaining the state's law library system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 24 & 25 — ARBITRATOR QUALIFICATIONS

Requires arbitrators to be Connecticut-licensed attorneys in good standing, unless waived by the parties in writing

When an arbitration agreement includes the method for selecting an arbitrator for a proceeding in this state, the bill requires the selected person to be a Connecticut-licensed attorney in good standing at the time of appointment and throughout the proceeding. The parties to the agreement may waive this requirement but must do so in writing.

If a party to the arbitration believes the appointed arbitrator does not meet this requirement, the bill limits how long they have to object to within 14 days after the appointment is made. For arbitration proceedings not conducted under the Uniform Arbitration Act, the bill also sets a 14-day deadline to object to an arbitrator's continued appointment after the parties receive actual notice in writing that the arbitrator is no longer in good standing.

It also allows a party to a proceeding pending on July 1, 2026, to file a written objection to the arbitrator's continued service as long as an evidentiary hearing has not begun. The Superior Court has the authority to determine whether a successor arbitrator should be appointed.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§§ 26 & 27 — ELECTRONIC NOTICE TO BAIL BOND AGENTS

Allows the court to electronically notify bail bond sureties when it forfeits a bond

By law, when the court orders a bond forfeited due to an arrestee's

failure to appear in court as required, it must notify the bond's surety, including an insurer, about the forfeiture. The bill allows this notice to be sent electronically, instead of only in writing, and makes conforming changes to the law requiring the return of certain collateral security or other indemnity after a bond terminates.

§ 28 — BOATING FINE REMITTANCE TO LAKE AUTHORITIES

Requires the state to remit all fines issued by lake authorities for boating law violations to the authority that issued the fine

The bill effectuates existing law's requirement that lake authorities receive revenue from the fines they issue for violations of state boating laws. Under existing law, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) must establish a schedule of retention fees that the authorities may keep. (DEEP's retention schedule for these fees has 100% of the boating fines being remitted to the issuing lake authorities.)

Specifically, the bill requires the state to remit the fines collected from boating law violators to the lake authority that issued the fine. The Superior Court clerk or the chief court administrator (or an official she designates) must certify to the comptroller the amount due for the previous quarter to each lake authority served by the clerk or official. The certifications must be made annually by the 30th days of January, April, July, and October.

§ 29 — JUDICIAL MARSHAL APPLICANT SUITABILITY

Requires the judicial branch to determine the suitability of a judicial marshal applicant

Under existing law, the chief court administrator must require anyone seeking employment as a judicial marshal to have a criminal background check done by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the FBI. The bill makes the judicial branch responsible for determining the applicant's suitability for employment.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 501 — HABEAS CORPUS TASK FORCE REPORT DEADLINE EXTENSION

Extends, by one year, the deadline for the habeas corpus procedures task force to submit its report to the Judiciary Committee

The bill extends by one year, from January 1, 2027, to January 1, 2028, the deadline for the habeas corpus procedures task force to submit its report to the Judiciary Committee. By law, this task force must (1) review the habeas corpus procedures the federal government and other states use and (2) make recommendations that include best practices to, among other things, ensure timely review and adjudication of claims and set standards for handling repeated claims.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 502 — OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRIVACY: PROTECTED INDIVIDUALS

Expands the list of people who may ask OIP to take steps to have personal information removed from an agency's website to include certain federal judges who live in Connecticut

PA 25-91 created an Office of Information Privacy (OIP) within the judicial branch and authorized it to direct a public agency, at the request of a "protected individual," to remove any specific personal information (home address or phone number, personal email address, or driver's license numbers, for example) from the agency's website, social media, a social network, or not to publish it.

Currently, the individuals who can ask OIP for this action include state justices, judges, and senior judges; state referees; family support magistrates and family support referees; and their spouse, children, and dependents living in the same household. The bill adds the following federal judges who are Connecticut residents, and the same category of household family members, to the list: district judges, court of appeals judges, bankruptcy judges, and magistrate judges.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

§ 503 — INMATE TRUST FUND ACCOUNT BALANCE DISBURSEMENT

Requires DOC to disburse the remaining balance in a person's Inmate Trust Fund account upon the person's release or by mail within two weeks after the release if it did not have at least two weeks' notice of the release date

The bill requires the DOC commissioner to disburse the remaining balance in a person's Inmate Trust Fund account upon the person's

release and allows the department to do so by cash, a check, or a prepaid device (a card, code, or other means of access to a consumer's account held by a financial institution or other financial service provider). DOC may only disburse funds by a prepaid device if it provides at least one alternative option of receiving the funds (cash or check). If DOC disburses funds by a prepaid device, the bill prohibits the department and the prepaid device issuer from charging the formerly incarcerated person a fee or causing a fee to be charged.

In situations where DOC cannot make the disbursement upon a person's release because it was not informed of the release date at least two weeks in advance, DOC must get the incarcerated person's mailing address before, or at the time of, his or her release and mail the disbursement to the person. It must be mailed within two weeks after the person's release by U.S. mail to the provided mailing address.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

Background — Related Bill

sSB 476, § 2, (File 590), favorably reported by the Appropriations and Judiciary committees, is identical to this provision.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 0 (03/30/2026)