

# Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-90 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT REVISING AND CONSOLIDATING THE HATE CRIMES STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/23/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/27/2026

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Request of the Governor Pursuant to Joint Rule 9

## **CO-SPONSORS:**

Rep. Geoff Luxenberg, 12<sup>th</sup> Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The purpose of this bill is to consolidate and reorganize Connecticut's hate crime statutes into a single, coherent chapter of the Penal Code. Existing hate crime laws are currently scattered throughout the General Statutes and contain inconsistent terminology, protected categories, and intent standards. Such discrepancies can make them difficult for law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts to identify and apply. This bill seeks to address these issues by standardizing definitions, clarifying intent requirements, and explicitly labeling certain offenses as hate crimes. These changes respond to concerns that the current statutory framework is difficult to interpret and apply, which can create challenges for law enforcement and prosecutors when investigating and charging bias-motivated crimes. The bill also reflects concerns regarding the need for clearer statutory protections for individuals and communities targeted by hate crimes.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language modifies Section 45 to require the Connecticut Sentencing Commission to review state laws for hate crimes and associated penalties in consultation with the State-Wide Hate Crimes Advisory Council.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Ned Lamont, Governor of Connecticut:** Governor Lamont supports the bill because it would consolidate and streamline Connecticut's hate crimes statutes, which are currently scattered throughout the General Statutes and contain inconsistent terminology and protected classes. He states that organizing these laws into a single chapter would improve clarity and make them easier for law enforcement and prosecutors to enforce. The Governor notes that the proposal was developed in collaboration with the Hate Crimes Advisory Council and other stakeholders to strengthen the state's ability to effectively address and prosecute hate crimes.

**William Tong, CT Attorney General:** Attorney General Tong supports S.B. 90 because Connecticut's hate crime statutes are currently scattered throughout the criminal code, contain inconsistent protections and intent standards, and are therefore difficult for law enforcement and courts to apply. He notes that the bill would streamline and consolidate these statutes into a single chapter, establish uniform protected categories, and clarify the law. These steps would effectively make hate crimes easier to charge, prosecute, and enforce both criminally and civilly. The Attorney General argues that these changes are necessary to enhance the state's ability to address rising hate crimes and better protect vulnerable communities.

**Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, Director Office of Chief Public Defender:** Deborah Del Prete Sullivan opposes the legislation because it removes the element of "maliciously" from certain intimidation statutes. She argues this would lower the state's burden of proof and make prosecutions easier, despite the serious consequences of conviction. She also raises concerns about undefined or inconsistent terminology, potential First Amendment implications, and the possibility that the bill could lead to stacked charges and unintended consequences, particularly affecting youth by expanding the scope of conduct that could be prosecuted as a hate crime.

**State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, External Affairs Division:** The Judicial Branch takes no position on the policy of S.B. 90, but requests technical clarifications to assist with implementation. Specifically, it asks that the bill clearly specify penalties for property damage of less than \$1,000 in certain sections and suggests dividing the offenses of burning a cross and placing a noose into separate subdivisions for conduct occurring on public versus private property. The Branch believes this would improve clarity and data tracking.

**Ronnell A. Higgins, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection:** Ronnell A. Higgins supports the legislation because consolidating Connecticut's fragmented hate crime statutes into a single chapter would make them easier for law enforcement, prosecutors, and the public to understand and apply. He states that the bill would improve consistency in enforcement and strengthen the state's response to hate crimes, which are increasing, while reinforcing Connecticut's commitment to protecting residents from acts of hate and intimidation.

**Patrick Griffin, Chief State's Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice:** Patrick Griffin supports the legislation because consolidating Connecticut's hate crime statutes into a single, coherent chapter of the penal code would make them easier for law enforcement, prosecutors, and the public to understand and apply. He notes that the bill would clarify

conflicting intent standards in current law, streamline prosecutions, reduce legal ambiguities, and improve enforcement. It would also more clearly identify these offenses as hate crimes and strengthening the state's response to bias-motivated offenses.

**Amy Lin Meyerson, Esq., Co-Chair of the Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council:**

Amy Lin Meyerson supports the legislation because it would consolidate Connecticut's numerous and fragmented hate crime statutes into a single chapter of the Penal Code. She emphasizes this would make them easier for law enforcement, attorneys, and courts to locate, understand, and enforce. She states that the bill would also resolve inconsistencies in existing statutes, clarify intent standards, and expand enforcement tools. These steps – along with explicitly labeling these offenses as “hate crimes” – effectively reinforces the state's condemnation of bias-motivated harm.

**Werner Oyanadel, Principal Commission Analyst, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity:**

Werner Oyanadel supports the legislation because it would consolidate Connecticut's scattered hate crime statutes into a single, clearer framework. These measures would improve accessibility, consistency, and enforcement. He states that clearer statutory language would strengthen the state's ability to respond to bias-motivated harm, support consistent enforcement and data collection, in addition to better reinforcing civil rights protections for vulnerable communities.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Daniel Feinstein, Attorney, Feinstein Education Law Group:** Daniel Feinstein supports the legislation because it would consolidate Connecticut's scattered hate crime statutes into a single chapter of the Penal Code, clarify protected classes and intent standards, and explicitly identify these offenses as hate crimes. He emphasizes that these changes would make the law easier for law enforcement to apply and bring greater clarity and consistency to the state's existing hate crime statutes without expanding their scope or penalties.

**Eadie Pitino, Associate Director, Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford:** Eadie Pitino supports the legislation because it would consolidate Connecticut's fragmented hate crime statutes into a clearer and more consistent framework. This would make them easier for law enforcement, courts, and victims to understand and apply. She states that the bill aligns definitions and organizes existing provisions without changing underlying policy, improving the effectiveness of the state's response to hate crimes that harm both individuals and the communities they target.

**Stacey Sobel (Esq.), Regional Director, ADL Connecticut:** Stacey Sobel supports the legislation because consolidating Connecticut's hate crime statutes would provide a clearer and more consistent legal framework. This would make it easier for law enforcement and the justice system to address and prosecute hate crimes. She also shares a personal experience in which, after delivering a presentation on “The State of Hate in Connecticut,” she received a threatening antisemitic postcard at her home referencing Zyklon B and depicting Anne Frank at Auschwitz. She emphasizes that these offenses have a profound impact on individuals and communities and stated that clear, accessible laws are necessary to ensure offenders are held accountable and victims are protected.

**Genesis Cora-Luquis:** Genesis Cora-Luquis supports the legislation because consolidating and clarifying Connecticut's hate crime statutes would improve consistency in enforcement and strengthen protections for vulnerable communities. She iterates that clearer laws would help law enforcement and prosecutors more effectively identify and pursue hate crimes. It would also reinforce that bias-motivated violence will not be tolerated and that all residents deserve to feel safe as well as protected.

**Christopher Ferace, Putnam CT Chief of Police, CT Police Chiefs Association**

**Department:** Christopher Ferace and the CPCA support the legislation because consolidating Connecticut's hate crime statutes into a single chapter would make them clearer and easier for police officers to locate, understand, and enforce. Drawing on his experience in law enforcement, Ferace references a March 2025 incident in Norwich in which a suspect who spray-painted swastikas was not charged with a hate crime because officers and prosecutors were unable to identify an applicable statute among the scattered provisions of current law. He states that the current statutes are scattered and difficult to apply in practice, and that the bill would simplify the process of identifying and charging hate crimes.

**Sachin Pandya, Richard Wilson, Professors, UConn Law:** Sachin S. Pandya and Richard A. Wilson support the legislation because it would consolidate Connecticut's scattered hate crime statutes into a single chapter of the Penal Code, making them easier for law enforcement, attorneys, and courts to locate, understand, and enforce. They state that the bill would also make the statutes more consistent by standardizing protected categories and intent requirements, clarify mental state language, and explicitly label these offenses as "hate crimes." These would improve both enforcement and public understanding of the law.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Connecticut Hospital Association:** The Connecticut Hospital Association opposes Section 11 of the legislation because it establishes a new hate crime related to violations of public accommodations laws without specifying a required level of intent or guilty mind. The Association argues that, as written, the provision could equate intentional discriminatory conduct with accidental or technical violations of laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, potentially criminalizing unintentional actions. It urges the committee to either remove Section 11 or add language requiring intent to intimidate or harass based on a protected category.

**Daniel Erwin, President, Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers' Association:** Daniel Erwin opposes the legislation because it raises First Amendment concerns and could lead to unintended consequences through the expansion of prosecutorial authority. The Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers' Association shares the concerns raised by the Office of the Chief Public Defender regarding potential First Amendment issues and unintended consequences. He argues that the bill could risk criminalizing protected speech or thought absent action and warned that expanding prosecutorial authority could lead to misuse or overreach.

**Reported by:** Justin Lamoureux

**Date:** March 25, 2026