

Public Safety Terminology: Peace Officers

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Issue

As a part of a series of questions on public safety terminology, you asked (1) about the persons defined as “peace officers” under [CGS § 53a-3\(9\)](#), as amended by [PA 25-29](#), § 8; (2) how this definition has changed over time; (3) where “peace officer” appears in statute and whether each reference is defined; and (4) whether the law requires any trainings specific to “peace officers.”

Summary

Connecticut law defines “peace officer” for purposes of the penal code and numerous other laws to include various state, local, and tribal officers ([CGS § 53a-3\(9\)](#); see Attachment 1). First enacted in 1971, the legislature has amended the statute 16 times, generally to expand the list of those considered peace officers under this law.

State law generally includes two other definitions of “peace officer,” one that applies to a set of gambling-related laws ([CGS § 53-278a](#)) and one that applies to a range of laws, including those on the inspector general’s use of force investigations, badge, and name tag identification requirements, and prohibited facial coverings ([CGS § 51-277a](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 3). We describe each of these definitions below. State law also includes numerous other statutory references to “peace officer” that do not define the term (see Attachment 2).

We identified two statutes that require trainings specifically for “peace officers.” [CGS §46-38b\(h\)](#), among other things, requires the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST), in conjunction with the Division of Criminal Justice, to establish an education and training program for

law enforcement officers, supervisors, and state's attorneys on the handling of family violence incidences. The training must, among other things, include training for peace officers at both recruit and in-service levels.

[CGS § 51-286](#) requires peace officers, except for judicial marshals and adult probation officers, and only if directed to by the chief state's attorney, to complete a training program on the uniform process for applying for and seeking the issuance of a detention order.

Definition of Peace Officer Under CGS § 53a-3(9)

Current Law

Connecticut law designates various state, local, and tribal officers as “peace officers” and gives them specific powers and protections under various statutes, including various police powers. Their powers include making warrantless arrests in their jurisdiction under certain circumstances and using physical force to make arrests or prevent escapes under certain circumstances ([CGS §§ 53a-3\(9\); 53a-22](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 4; & [54-1f](#)).

[CGS § 53a-3\(9\)](#) designates the following people as peace officers, generally, for purposes of the state's penal code and associated statutes:

1. state and local police,
2. Division of Criminal Justice inspectors,
3. state marshals exercising statutory powers,
4. judicial marshals performing their duties,
5. conservation or special conservation officers,
6. constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties,
7. appointed special police officers,
8. adult probation officers,
9. Department of Correction (DOC) officials authorized to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility,
10. investigators in the Office of the State Treasurer,
11. POST-certified Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) inspectors,
12. U.S. marshals and deputy marshals,

13. U.S. special agents authorized to enforce federal food and drug laws, and
14. POST-certified police officers of a law enforcement unit created and governed under a state-tribal memorandum.

History of CGS § 53a-3(9)

The penal code definition of “peace officer” was first added by PA 71-871. Under the act, peace officers included:

1. state and local police,
2. county detectives,
3. sheriffs or deputy sheriffs,
4. conservation or special conservation officers,
5. constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties, and
6. DOC officials authorized to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility.

Since 1971, the legislature has amended the definition 16 times, as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Legislative History of CGS § 53a-3(9) Since 1971

Act	Summary of Change
PA 72-188	Included special police for state property appointed under CGS § 29-18
PA 73-295	Included special police for investigating public assistance fraud appointed under CGS § 29-18a
PA 74-186	Replaced county detectives with Division of Criminal Justice detectives (county government abolished)
PA 75-283	Included special police for utility and transportation companies appointed under CGS § 29-19
PA 76-111	Substituted Division of Criminal Justice chief inspectors and inspectors for detectives
PA 80-308	Included adult probation officers appointed under CGS § 54-104
PA 80-394	Included special deputy sheriffs
PA 85-602	Included investigators in the Office of the State Treasurer
PA 91-171	Included U.S. special agents authorized to enforce federal food and drug laws
PA 94-1, May Special Session (MSS)	Replaced investigators in the Office of the State Treasurer with investigators in the Workers’ Compensation Commission
PA 95-277	Reversed the change in PA 94-1, MSS
PA 00-99	Replaced sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and special deputy sheriffs with state marshals exercising statutory powers and judicial marshals performing their duties

Table 1 (continued)

Act	Summary of Change
PA 13-170	Included POST-certified police officers of a law enforcement unit created and governed under a state-tribal memorandum
PA 15-211	Included U.S. marshals and deputy marshals
PA 19-108	Included POST-certified DMV inspectors
PA 22-117	Included special police for the Department of Revenue Services appointed under CGS § 29-18b

Peace Officer References in Statute

We identified 73 instances of “peace officer” in the Connecticut General Statutes revised to January 1, 2026, and several additional references created under a 2026 act. The majority of these statutory references can be grouped into two categories: (1) “peace officer” as defined in [CGS § 53a-3\(9\)](#), and (2) “peace officer” with no specific definition. Attachments 1 and 2, respectively, list and briefly describe these statutory references.

The remaining statutes reference “peace officer” as defined in (1) [CGS § 51-277a](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 3, or (2) [CGS § 53-278a](#). We describe each of these definitions below.

Definition of “Peace Officer” Under CGS § 51-277a, as amended by PA 26-14

A new law passed this session, [PA 26-14](#), § 3, applies a broader definition of peace officer than the definition under [CGS § 53a-3\(9\)](#) to certain statutes to encompass a wider range of federal officers. Under the latter definition, peace officer includes federal marshals and deputy marshals and special agents authorized to enforce federal food and drug laws. Under [CGS § 51-277a](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 3, it instead includes any:

1. officer, agent, or employee who the law or a government agency authorizes to prevent, detect, investigate, or prosecute a federal crime (or to supervise these actions) (18 U.S.C. § 115(c)(1)), and
2. employee, including an Amtrak or Federal Reserve law enforcement officer, authorized by law to make arrests or apprehensions and by the employing agency to carry firearms, who mainly (a) prevents, detects, investigates, prosecutes, or assists in the incarceration of someone who violates the law (or supervises these actions) or (b) protects government officials against personal safety threats (34 U.S.C. § 50301(5)).

The act applies this definition to several existing and newly created statutes. Specifically, it applies to the laws that generally:

1. require the (a) Division of Criminal Justice to investigate whenever a peace officer, while performing his or her duties, uses physical force on someone that causes that person's death or uses deadly physical force on another person and (b) inspector general to determine if the use of physical force was justifiable ([CGS §§ 51-277a](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 3, & [PA 25-29](#), § 7; [53a-22](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 4, & [PA 25-29](#), § 9; and [51-277e](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 5, & [PA 25-39](#), § 22);
2. prohibit, with exceptions, peace officers from wearing a facial covering or personal disguise when interacting with the public and performing law enforcement duties ([PA 26-14](#), § 6; not yet codified);
3. require peace officers to be clearly identified by their badge and name tag when making a planned, authorized arrest or interacting with the public in an official capacity ([PA 26-14](#), § 6; not yet codified);
4. prohibit peace officers from taking someone into custody on the basis of a civil offense in a state or municipal facility or certain other locations such as schools, hospitals, and houses of worship ("protected areas") without a judicial warrant for the person ([PA 26-14](#), § 7; not yet codified);
5. prohibit POST from waiving the basic training program requirements to be certified as a police officer for peace officers unless they give evidence of satisfactorily completing a substantially equivalent training or education program with at least 480 training hours ([CGS § 7-294d](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 9);
6. make a peace officer's employer (see below) liable if the officer interferes with someone taking a photo, digital still, or video image of them or another officer performing his or her duties and make an immunity defense unavailable in a civil liability action for an intentional tort committed while interfering with the taking of the photo, digital still, or video image ([CGS § 52-571j](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 10); and
7. prohibit hiring peace officers who (a) were dismissed for malfeasance or serious misconduct or (b) resigned or retired during an investigation for this conduct ([CGS § 7-291c](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 12).

The law on officer interference with photo or video taking applies a slightly different definition of "peace officer" than these other statutes by excluding any member of the Mashantucket Pequot or Mohegan Tribe law enforcement units ([CGS § 52-571j](#), as amended by [PA 26-14](#), § 10.)

Definition of "Peace Officer" Under CGS § 53-278a

For the purposes of certain gambling related statutes, ([CGS §§ 53-278a](#) to [-278g](#)), a "peace officer" is a (1) municipal or state police officer, (2) chief inspector or inspector in the Division of Criminal Justice, (3) state marshal exercising statutory powers, or (4) judicial marshal performing his or her duties ([CGS § 53-278a](#)). These peace officers are authorized to seize certain illegal

gambling implements, and can revoke certain licenses, permits, and certificates of illegal gambling premises ([CGS §§ 53-278c & 53-278e](#)).

Attachment 1: Statutes That Reference “Peace Officer” as Defined in CGS § 53a-3(9)

§	Brief Description of Peace Officer Reference
7-294mm	Establishes a procedure for on-duty peace officers, that are sworn members of law enforcement agencies, to provide notice to the next of kin of any deceased person the officer encounters
7-294pp	Gives anyone who is experiencing an emergency medical condition, or is medically unstable, the right to be provided with emergency medical services while in direct audio or video contact with a peace officer or under a peace officer’s custody or control; requires a peace officer to request emergency medical services for that person under certain conditions
8-44b	Specifies that certain housing authority special police officers are peace officers
14-164aa	Allows peace officers to retrieve, obtain, and use data from vehicle event data recorders (EDR) under a lawful search warrant; prohibits anyone from knowingly altering or deleting EDR data, or knowingly destroying an EDR, after a crash that resulted in death or serious physical injury before a peace officer has been given a reasonable amount of time to obtain a search warrant
14-296aa , as amended by PA 26-63 , § 31, and PA 26-120	Allows peace officers to hold and use hand-held electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle on a highway while performing their official duties and within the scope of their employment
21a-261	Generally, deems the Department of Consumer Protection commissioner and his authorized agents to be acting as peace officers when performing specified duties
29-1k	Requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to establish an emergency alert system to help law enforcement agencies (1) apprehend anyone suspected of killing or seriously injuring a peace officer or (2) locate a missing peace officer
31-349a	Specifies that Office of the State Treasurer investigators have the powers of a peace officer when investigating Second Injury Fund claims and employer compliance with certain other employment-related liability claims
46b-125	Generally, deems juvenile probation officers and juvenile matters investigators to be acting in the capacity of peace officers when executing certain court orders
51-286/	Requires certain peace officers to complete a Chief State’s Attorney training program on the uniform process for applying for and seeking juvenile detention orders
52-146v , as amended by PA 26-92 , § 10	Limits the disclosure of confidential communications between first responders, including peace officers, and peer support team members; immunizes (1) employers from damages for setting up or maintaining a peer support program for their first responder employees and (2) peer support team members from liability for performing peer support services for a first responder’s benefit
53-206b	Exempts peace officers lawfully performing their official duties from the law prohibiting certain training for use in violent public disturbances
53-247	Sets penalties for people who intentionally injure or kill peace officer service animals
53-341c	Sets penalties for peace officers who, when responding to a request to provide someone with medical or other assistance and outside of their official duties, knowingly take and transmit the person’s photo or digital image or make the image available to a third person without consent

Attachment 1 (continued)

§	Brief Description of Peace Officer Reference
53a-19	Specifies that a person, when using deadly force to protect themselves or others, does not have a duty to retreat if they are a peace officer or private person assisting a peace officer under certain conditions
53a-23	Prohibits someone from using physical force to resist an arrest by a reasonably identifiable peace officer, whether or not the arrest is legal
53a-111	Sets a criminal penalty for anyone who, with intent to destroy or damage a building, starts a fire or causes an explosion that causes a substantial risk of bodily injury to a peace officer at the scene
53a-167a	Sets a criminal penalty for interfering with an officer for obstructing, resisting, hindering, or endangering any peace officer performing his or her duties
53a-167b	Sets a criminal penalty for failing to assist a peace officer under certain circumstances
53a-167c	Sets a criminal penalty for certain assaults on peace officers
53a-180 , as amended by PA 26-77 , § 32	Sets a criminal penalty for falsely reporting an incident that results in a large-scale emergency response (on-site response that includes five or more first responders, which include peace officers)
53a-213a & 53a-213b , as amended by PA 25-19 and PA 26-8	Prohibits peace officers from stopping vehicles solely for violations of the laws against using cannabis in a vehicle unless the officer sees the operator actively consuming cannabis, or smells burnt cannabis
53a-217b	Allows peace officers, while engaged in their official duties, to lawfully possess a firearm or deadly weapon while on school grounds
54-1f	Generally requires peace officers to arrest, without a previous complaint or warrant, anyone apprehended in the act or upon the speedy information of others; however, elected constables cannot do so unless the town provides, by ordinance, that they are peace officers for these purposes
54-86c	Requires peace officers to disclose in writing any exculpatory information or material they may have with respect to any criminal investigation to the prosecutorial official in charge of that case

Attachment 2: Statutes That Reference “Peace Officer” With No Definition

§	Brief Description of Peace Officer Reference
12-305 , 12-318 , 12-330g , 12-454 , & 12-461a	Authorizes peace officers, when directed by the Department of Revenue Services commissioner, to seize untaxed cigarettes, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, or fuel without a warrant
14-226	Requires anyone who knowingly injures or kills a dog with a motor vehicle to report it to a peace officer or other specified people
15-60	Requires certain aircraft personnel operating in Connecticut to keep their federal credentials and any out-of-state registration in the aircraft and in their personal possession and, when asked, present them to a peace officer
15-140o	Specifies the procedure for authorized peace officers to seize vessels to enforce certain boating laws
15-140g , as amended by PA 25-159 , § 14, and 15-140r , as amended by PA 26-8 , § 9, and PA 26-45 , § 3	Among other things, specifies the procedure for chemical tests for vessel operators (which peace officers may perform) and suspensions of safe boating certificates for boating under the influence
15-154	Specifies that only peace officers may enforce certain boating statutes (for example, the reckless operation of a vessel in the first degree while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs, CGS § 15-140i)
17a-594	Authorizes peace officers to take certain conditionally released acquittees into custody under certain health-related circumstances
19a-406 & 19a-407	Requires the chief medical examiner to investigate the death of anyone in a peace officer’s custody that was not clearly the result of natural causes and prohibits any unauthorized person from disturbing the scene of the death
21a-422o	Exempts peace officers from certain employment-related cannabis use, consumption, and testing laws
26-26b	Under the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, specifies that “citations” and “collateral” include those issued by a peace officer
27-146	Allows authorized peace officers to apprehend a person subject to the Connecticut Code of Military Justice upon the reasonable belief that he or she committed an offense
27-267	Authorizes peace officers to execute military court processes and mandates
29-14	Requires the State Police Bureau of Identification to (1) promptly return certain identifying and criminal records to the police departments or peace officers that submitted them and (2) help any police department and peace officer with fingerprinting and criminal descriptions when called on for assistance
29-16	Allows conviction information contained in State Police Bureau of Identification files to be available to peace officers engaged in the detection of crime
29-33	Allows peace officers to purchase or receive a handgun without a valid permit or eligibility certificate

Attachment 2 (continued)

§	Brief Description of Peace Officer Reference
29-35	Allows Connecticut peace officers, and other states' peace officers on official business, to carry a handgun without a permit and knowingly carry any firearm with intent to display it
29-361	Exempts peace officers performing their official duties from certain fireworks laws
30-45 , as amended by PA 25-51 , § 14	Prohibits the Department of Consumer Protection from issuing alcoholic liquor permits to certain constables that perform criminal law enforcement duties and are considered peace officers by town ordinance
46b-38a	Defines “institutions and services” for the purpose of certain family violence laws to include peace officers
46b-38b	Specifies procedures for the investigation of family violence crimes by peace officers, among other things; exempts peace officers from civil liability for personal or property injury when a party brings a family violence action for (1) an arrest based on probable cause, (2) any conditions of release, or (3) certain determinations made during the investigation
46b-38d	Requires peace officers that respond to family violence incidents to complete a family violence offense report, regardless of whether an arrest occurs
53-206c	Sets a criminal penalty for displaying a facsimile of a firearm or the simulation of a firearm in the presence of a peace officer performing his or her duties, generally
54-33k & 54-33l	Sets strip search procedures for peace officers and police department employees
54-91c , as amended by PA 26-130 , § 9	Under the law on victim statements, requires a peace officer to be notified of the date, time, and place of the original sentencing hearing or plea bargaining in any case in which a defendant was originally charged with assaulting the peace officer with the intent to prevent the officer from performing his or her duties (under CGS § 53a-167c) (Although this statute does not include a definition for peace officer, it references CGS § 53a-167c , which defines peace officer as defined in CGS § 53a-3)
54-126a	Requires notifications of certain parole hearings to be made to the chief law enforcement officer of the town in which the crime occurred in cases where the victim is a deceased peace officer
54-127b	Allows peace officers who are sworn members of a law enforcement agency, among others, to file an emergency petition regarding a person on parole or probation who poses a serious threat to public safety under certain circumstances
54-163 , 54-164 , 54-165 , 54-169 , and 54-170	Under the Uniform Criminal Extradition Act, generally authorizes (1) the governor to direct peace officers or others to execute arrest warrants related to extradition demands; (2) officers executing these warrants to take certain actions; (3) judges to issue arrest warrants for specified violators; and (4) peace officers or others to make certain arrests without a warrant

Attachment 2 (continued)

§	Brief Description of Peace Officer Reference
54-222a	Specifies certain duties of peace officers if they determine a crime has been committed (for example, rendering immediate assistance to any crime victim if necessary or referring the victim to the Office of Victim Services); specifies that peace officers are not liable if they do not perform specified duties

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