

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 26-92—sSB 475
Judiciary Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS

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SUMMARY: This act generally makes various unrelated changes in laws on court procedures and operations. It also makes associated technical and conforming changes. A section-by-section analysis follows.

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

§§ 1 & 2 — JUDICIAL BRANCH CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

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

Prior law capped 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 act (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 previously required 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 the chief court administrator to establish a procedure for the judicial branch to dispose of unclaimed detainee personal property

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The act requires the chief court administrator to establish a procedure for selling or disposing of unclaimed detainee property, including clothing and jewelry, after a reasonable effort is made 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 — TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REPORT DEADLINE

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 act 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

Existing 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, 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 act 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 act also generally consolidates four authorized disclosures. Previously, the below information could be disclosed as follows:

1. information allowed under chief court administrator-adopted guidelines

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- could 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 could 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 could 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 could be shared with a probation officer to prepare a presentence investigation report.

Consolidating and broadening them, the act allows for disclosure of all files and reports about the defendant to another CSSD employee 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; or (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 act 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 act 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 parentage registry inclusion. (In 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 act 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 act 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 act 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 act 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 performing peer support services for a first responder's benefit (including deciding if it is appropriate to disclose confidential communications). However, this 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 act requires JSC, annually by January 1, 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 act, this list is confidential and not open to the public or subject to disclosure.

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

Requires program applicants who live outside of Connecticut to return to the state for mental health assessment; requires classifying program participants based on risk level for supervisory and monitoring purposes; allows, instead of requires, CSSD to consult with DMHAS to develop standards, oversee treatment programs, and contract 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, and the court refers the applicant to CSSD to determine eligibility and assess the person's mental health condition. Under the act, 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 act, 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, prior law required CSSD to develop standards and oversee treatment programs and allowed it to contract with service providers, but all of this had to be done in consultation with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). The act instead gives CSSD discretion to consult with DMHAS for this purpose.

§ 14 — JUVENILE RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Specifically allows the court to order a risk and needs assessment of an arrested child when it has 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, prior

law allowed it to consider whether the child should be assessed for services. The act instead allows the court to order a risk and needs assessment to determine if the child could benefit from services. The assessment generally must be confidential, as the law already requires for a child's risk or mental or behavioral health screening.

Under existing law, unchanged by the act, the assessment must occur within two weeks after the child's arraignment and the 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 act 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 act, requires DOC to report on this same 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 act 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.

Prior law required the judicial branch to send the notice within one business day after the child's placement. Under the act, DCF must send the notice immediately upon placement, aligned with its existing requirements to seek the transfer of 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. Prior law required 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 act 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 does not need to hear oral testimony unless the lienor offers it.

§ 18 — JUDICIAL BRANCH OFFICIAL SEAL

Restricts making or using the judicial branch's official seal and imitations of it

The act prohibits making or using the judicial branch's official seal, including imitations of it through a reproduction, imprint, or facsimile, without OCCA's direction and approval. It also generally restricts the seal's use to purposes (1) specifically authorized by the state's constitution and statutes or (2) related to the judicial branch's official business. The act 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 act 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 prior law, eligible "emotional harm" was a mental or emotional impairment directly attributable to a threat of physical injury or death. The act 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, prior law required the chief court administrator to prescribe any necessary policies and procedures to implement victim services and allowed her to formulate standards for uniformly paying compensation claims. The act 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 act 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 act (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 act generally 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 it must be in writing.

If a party to the arbitration believes the appointed arbitrator does not meet this requirement, the act limits how long they have to object to within 14 days after the appointment is made. Additionally, for proceedings not conducted under the Uniform Arbitration Act, the act 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.

Under the act, a party to a proceeding pending on July 1, 2026, may 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

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Allows the court to electronically notify bail bond sureties when a bond is forfeited

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 act 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 act implements existing law's requirement that multi-town 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 act 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 quarterly by the 30th day 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 act makes the judicial branch responsible for determining the applicant's suitability for employment.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 30 — 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 act 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 repeated claims.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 31 — 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, or a social network, or not to publish it.

Previously, the individuals who could ask OIP for this action included 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 act 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

§ 32 — 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 act requires DOC to disburse the remaining balance in a person’s Inmate Trust Fund account to the person upon their release and allows it 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). But DOC may only disburse funds by a prepaid device if it offers at least one alternative option of receiving the funds (cash or check). If DOC disburses funds by a prepaid device, the act prohibits it 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 told about the release date at least two weeks beforehand, DOC must ask the person for a mailing address before, or at the time of, their release and mail the disbursement to them. The mailing must occur within two weeks after the person’s release by U.S. mail to the provided address.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026