
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 509

AN ACT CONCERNING ADDRESS VERIFICATION REFORMS FOR REGISTRANTS.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes to laws on sex offender registration, including registration requirement violations, address verification forms, and removal from the registry.

The bill reduces the penalty for violations of the sex offender registration requirements from a class D felony to a class C misdemeanor. By law, a class D felony is punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine up to \$5,000, or both. A class C misdemeanor is punishable by up to three months in prison, a fine up to \$500, or both.

The bill also requires the court to enter a decision to not prosecute in certain circumstances and creates an affirmative defense for uncontrollable circumstances.

The bill makes the following changes related to sex offender registrants' address verification requirement:

1. modifies the address verification form's return instructions;
2. establishes a process for a registrant to request a form if one was not received and requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to send it within five business days of the request;
3. increases the time for a registrant to return an address verification form after receiving it, from 10 days after the form's mailing date to 30 days after the form's postmark;
4. prohibits DESPP from notifying state or local police of a person's failure to register before 30 days after the form's postmark date;

and

5. sets a five-business-day deadline for (a) DESPP to inform state and local police that a person is no longer required to register and (b) DESPP and the police to remove the person's name from the registry.

It also modifies the definition of the term "sexually violent offense" as it relates to 3rd degree sexual assault by making engaging in sexual intercourse with certain relatives not a sexually violent offense, but it makes subjecting a person to sexual contact when the person is mentally incapacitated or impaired because of mental disability or disease and is unable to consent a sexually violent offense under the law (§ 1).

Lastly, the bill makes minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

SEXUAL OFFENDER REGISTRATION

By law, certain offenders must register as sex offenders for a specified period of time (see BACKGROUND). Sex offenders are generally required to register within three days after release, as directed by the Department of Correction commissioner, or without undue delay after moving to Connecticut. By law, these offenders are:

1. required to register their name, identifying factors (including a photograph and fingerprints), criminal history record, residential address, and email and instant message addresses and other similar Internet communication identifiers;
2. subject to address verification and the retaking of photographs; and
3. subject to the notification provisions that apply to victims and certain students and employees.

Decision to Not Prosecute

Under the bill, the court must enter a decision to not prosecute (nolle prosequi) charges for violating the registration requirements, if the

person who is charged with the violation has no prior conviction for that violation and becomes compliant within 20 business days after his or her arraignment for the violation.

Affirmative Defense

In cases where a person is prosecuted for failure to comply with the registration requirements, the bill creates an affirmative defense that:

1. uncontrollable circumstances prevented the person from complying with the provisions,
2. the person did not cause the circumstances in reckless disregard to the requirements, and
3. the person became compliant as soon as the circumstances no longer existed.

ADDRESS VERIFICATION

By law, DESPP generally must verify each registered sex offender’s residential address every 90 days after his or her initial registration by mailing a verification form to his or her last reported address. The bill specifies that this is an address verification form. (Under the law, if the registrant lives at an address where there is no residential mail delivery, the local police department or state police troop in whose jurisdiction the registrant resides must verify a registrant’s residential address in person every 90 days.)

Form Return. Under existing law, the registrant may return the form by fax, email, or mail. The bill increases the time for a registrant to return an address verification form after receiving it, from 10 days after the form’s mailing date to 30 days after the form’s postmark. Correspondingly, the bill prohibits DESPP from informing the state or local police of a person’s failure to register before 30 days after the postmark on the form.

Form Content. Under current law, the form must contain a statement that failure to return the form or providing false information is a violation of the applicable sex offender registration requirement. The

bill additionally requires the form to include a statement in bold text explaining that the form can be returned by mail, fax, or email and provide the mailing address, fax number, and email address for the form's return.

Form Request. The bill also (1) allows a registrant who does not receive an address verification form by mail to ask DESPP to mail it to him or her and (2) requires DESPP to mail it to the registrant within five business days after receiving the request.

REMOVAL FROM THE REGISTRY

Under current law, when a person has completed their registration period, DESPP must notify the state or local police with jurisdiction that the person is no longer a sex offender registrant, and then DESPP and the applicable police department must remove them from the registry. The bill requires DESPP and the applicable police department to take these steps within five business days after the person completes their registration period.

BACKGROUND

Sex Offender Required Registration

Connecticut law recognizes four categories of sex crimes for sex offender registration purposes:

1. criminal offenses against minor victims (CGS § 54-251);
2. non-violent sexual offenses (CGS § 54-251);
3. sexually violent offenses (CGS § 54-252); and
4. felonies committed for sexual purposes (CGS §§ 54-250(2), (5), (11), and (12); CGS § 54-254).

Those convicted of crimes in the first three categories must register as sex offenders; courts may require registration of those in the fourth.

The law also requires registration for persons convicted of a sexual offense in another jurisdiction (CGS § 54-253).

Registration is with DESPP, which maintains an online, searchable registry.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 26 Nay 10 (03/24/2026)