

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 26-96—sSB 509

Judiciary Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING ADDRESS VERIFICATION REFORMS FOR REGISTRANTS

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes to sex offender registration laws, including those related to registration violations and address verification.

First, the act creates an affirmative defense for when circumstances beyond the person's control generally prevent him or her from complying with registration requirements.

The act changes the address verification requirements by, among other things, (1) requiring registrants to submit proof of residency to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) within a specified time frame, (2) allowing the verification form to be returned in person, (3) specifying the documents that may be used for this purpose, and (4) requiring DESPP to mail the verification form to registrants who do not submit proof of residency.

The act also modifies the types of "sexually violent offenses" subject to the sex offender registry law as it relates to 3rd degree sexual assault. Specifically, it excludes engaging in sexual intercourse with certain relatives and instead includes subjecting a person to sexual contact when the person is mentally incapacitated or impaired due to mental disability or disease and unable to consent (§ 1).

Lastly, the act makes minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE FOR VIOLATING REGISTRATION LAW

By law, certain offenders must register as sex offenders for a specified period, and they generally must do so within three days after release, as directed by the Department of Correction commissioner if still in her custody, or without undue delay after moving to Connecticut (see BACKGROUND). By law, these offenders:

1. must 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, and
2. are subject to (a) address verification (see below) and the retaking of photographs and (b) the notification provisions that apply to victims and certain students and employees.

For those prosecuted for failure to comply with the registration requirements, the act creates an affirmative defense that:

1. circumstances beyond the person's control prevented him or her from complying,
2. the person played no part in creating the circumstances, and

3. the person became compliant within 20 business days after the circumstances no longer existed.

By law, unchanged by the act, a violation of the sex offender registration requirements is generally a class D felony (see [Table on Penalties](#)).

ADDRESS VERIFICATION

Proof of Residency

Prior law generally required DESPP to verify each registrant's residential address every 90 days after his or her initial registration by mailing a non-forwardable verification form ("address verification form" under the act) to the registrant's last reported address.

The act instead requires (1) registrants to submit proof of residency by mail, fax, email, or in person to DESPP within at least 75 days, but no more than 90 days, after the initial registration date and (2) DESPP to mail the address verification form only to the registrants who fail to submit the proof of residency within this time frame. It applies these same requirements to subsequent address verifications which, by law, are required every 90 days.

Documents That Prove Residency

Under the act, DESPP must accept any of the following documents as proof of residency, if they contain the registrant's residence address and are dated within 30 days before their submission to the department:

1. a utility bill, such as for electricity, gas, water, or Internet service;
2. a financial statement, such as a bank or credit card statement;
3. a homeowner's, renter's, or motor vehicle insurance bill or statement;
4. official correspondence from a state or federal government agency; and
5. any other document the department deems sufficient for this purpose.

As under existing law, if the registrant lives at an address with no residential mail delivery, the local police department or state police troop in whose jurisdiction the registrant resides must verify the registrant's residential address in person.

Address Verification Form

Form Return Method and Deadline. Under prior law, the address verification form required the registrant to (1) sign a statement that he or she continues to live at the last reported address and (2) return the form by fax, email, or mail by 10 days after the form's mailing date. The act (1) gives the registrant the added option to return the form in person and (2) specifies that the 10-day deadline is measured from the form's postmark date.

Form Content. Prior law required that the form have a statement that failure to return it or giving false information is a violation of the applicable sex offender registration requirement. The act additionally requires the form to have a statement in bold (1) explaining that it may be returned to the department by mail, fax, email,

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or in person and (2) showing the respective addresses and fax number for its return.

Failure to Return Form or Provide Proof of Residency

Under existing law, if a registrant fails to return the address verification form, DESPP must notify the local or appropriate state police troop, and that agency must, in turn, apply for an arrest warrant. The act specifies that DESPP and the police must take these actions if the registrant fails to return an address verification form or submit proof of residency as described above.

BACKGROUND

Sex Offender Required Registration

Connecticut law recognizes the following four categories of sex crimes for sex offender registration purposes: criminal offenses against minor victims, non-violent sexual offenses, sexually violent offenses, and felonies committed for sexual purposes. 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 people convicted of a sexual offense in another jurisdiction. Registration is with DESPP, which maintains an online, searchable registry.