



The 2017 legislative session convened January 4th through June 7, 2017 at the State Capitol in Hartford, Connecticut. The Office of The Victim Advocate (OVA) is mandated by statute to monitor legislation that may affect the statutory and constitutional rights of crime victims in the state of Connecticut. The OVA submitted legislation, written testimony and gave oral presentations on several bills throughout the session. Below is a summary of bills passed that affect crime victims in the state of Connecticut. Should you have questions regarding any specific bill language please contact our office for assistance.

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

Senate Bill No. 930, An Act Concerning the Receipt of Annual Reports on Anti-Human Trafficking from Law Enforcement Agencies – Public Act No. 17-129, effective 10/1/2017

- Requires the Chief State's Attorney and each municipal police chief to annually report on anti-human trafficking efforts to the Trafficking in Persons Council.

Senate Bill No. 1003, An Act Concerning Revisions to Various Statutes Concerning the Criminal Justice System – Public Act No. 17-87, effective 10/1/2017

- Increases the civil judgment duration of an order of restitution from 10 years to 20 years, consistent with all other civil judgments.
- Adds spousal sexual assault to the confidentiality provisions regarding names and other identifying information.

House Bill No. 6999, An Act Concerning the Provision of Information about the Use of Therapy Dogs to Comfort and Support Testifying Witnesses in Certain Criminal Prosecutions – Public Act No. 17-185, effective 10/1/2017

- Requires the Judicial Branch to maintain information on its website regarding the use of a dog to provide comfort and support to a testifying witness in certain criminal prosecutions.

Senate Bill No. 980, An Act Concerning Intimidating a Witness – Public Act No. 17-24, effective 10/1/2017

- Increases the penalty for intimidating a witness from a class C felony to a class B felony.

Senate Bill No. 1022, An Act Establishing a Pilot Program to Provide Enhanced Community Services to Those in the Criminal Justice System – Public Act No. 17-205, effective 10/1/2017

- Requires the Chief State's Attorney to establish a pilot program to serve Hartford, New Haven, New London and Norwich in identifying and tracking the homeless, addicted or mentally ill persons entering the criminal justice system.

House Bill No. 5743, An Act Concerning Hate Crimes – Public Act No. 17-111, effective 10/1/2017

- Imposes minimum fines for certain hate crimes.
- Increases the penalty for 1st and 2nd degree threatening when the threat affects a house of worship, religiously-affiliated community center or day care center.
- Enhances the penalty for desecration of a house of religious worship.
- Increases the penalty for 3rd degree intimidation based on bigotry or bias from a class A misdemeanor to a class E felony.
- Replaces the Hate Crimes Advisory Committee with a new State-Wide Hate Crimes Advisory Council within the Office of the Chief State's Attorney.

House Bill No. 7044, An Act Concerning Pretrial Justice Reform – Public Act No. 17-145, effective 7/1/2017

- Limits the circumstances in which a court can impose financial conditions of release for someone charged only with a misdemeanor that is not a family violence crime.
- Prohibits courts from requiring cash-only bail for certain offenses.
- Requires a bail review hearing, within 14 days of arraignment rather than 30 days, for defendants who cannot make bail and are only charged with a misdemeanor.
- Requires the court to remove financial bail conditions unless the court makes certain findings.

House Bill No. 7090, An Act Concerning the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Recommendations Regarding Transfer of a Patient under the Jurisdiction of the Psychiatric Security Review Board for Treatment or Recovery – Public Act No. 17-179, effective 10/1/2017

- Ensures that an acquittee's custody conditions at a hospital or emergency room are equivalent to those of maximum security confinement.
- Provides immediate written justification to the Psychiatric Security Review Board upon the transfer of an acquittee.
- Transfers the acquittee back to the maximum security setting after the medical treatment is completed.

House Bill No. 7262, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Victim Notification – Public Act No. 17-217, effective 10/1/2017

- Requires the court to make more information available to crime victims about sentencing and plea bargains.
- Requires the Department of Correction to make general offender sentencing information available to the public.

House Bill No. 7198, An Act Concerning Court Operations, Victim Services, Fraudulent Filings and Transfers of an Interest in Real Property to a Trust – Public Act No. 17-99, effective 10/1/2017

- Expands the powers and duties of the Office of Victim Services (OVS).
- Creates a new process for victims seeking enforcement of financial restitution orders.
- Makes more victims eligible for victim compensation from OVS by expanding injuries, crimes and situations under which a victim may qualify for compensation.
- Allows OVA to waive consideration of available health insurance when determining victim compensation and requires health care providers to suspend debt collection from victims in certain circumstances.
- Expands the availability of civil protection orders to certain stalking victims.
- Expands victims' access to juvenile records.

House Bill N. 7299, An Act Concerning Strengthening Laws Concerning Domestic Violence – Public Act No. 17-31, effective 10/1/2017

- Expands the conduct that constitutes stalking to include conduct that causes a reasonable person to suffer "emotional distress."
- Specifies that 1st or 2nd degree stalking may occur through the use of electronic or social media.
- Broadens the strangulation statutes to include suffocation that occurs when a person obstructs another person's nose or mouth.
- Increases the penalty for violating the conditions of release when the violation involves certain conduct.
- Requires a presentence investigation for anyone convicted of a family violence felony for which a prison sentence may be imposed and prohibits a defendant from waiving the investigation.

House Bill No. 7309, An Act Concerning Human Trafficking – Public Act No. 17-32, effective 10/1/2017

- Adds to the membership of the Trafficking in Persons Council and expands the council's charge.
- Expands the type of conduct punishable as a trafficking in person's crime and increases the penalty.
- Reduces the penalty for patronizing a prostitute when the person is a trafficking victim.
- Creates a new crime of commercial sexual abuse of a minor.
- Requires the Department of Children and Families to consult with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection in developing an educational and refresher training program related to human trafficking.

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