

# SPORTS OFFICIALS LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

Has your state passed laws related to assaults on officials, officials' liability or independent contractor status? Those three issues impact sports officials and the officiating industry. Many states have realized the importance of addressing those topics.

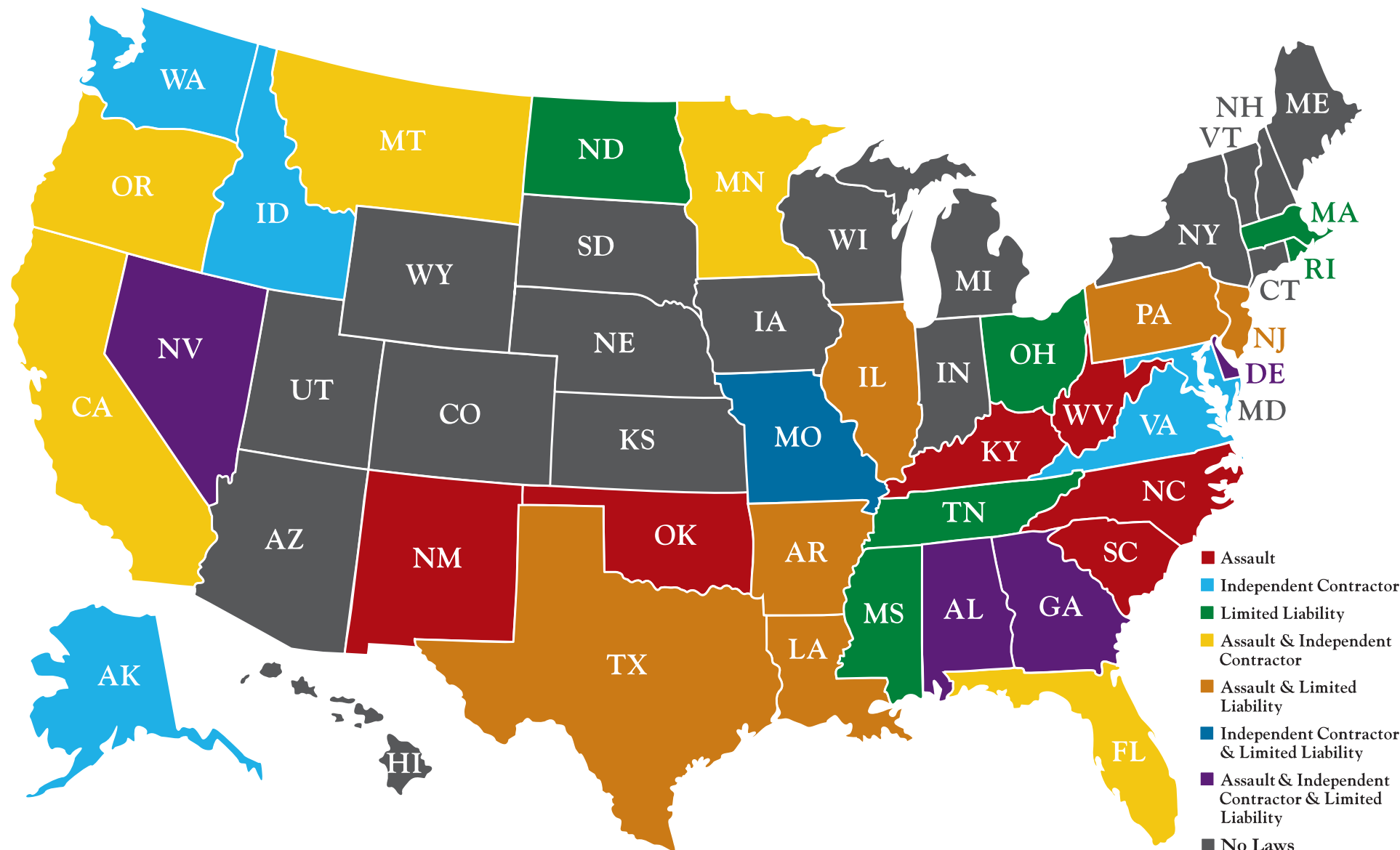
Sports officials should be able to perform their duties without threat of personal injury, administrative hearings or litigation because of their game calls. Being a referee or umpire is no easy task. State legislators can show support for the men and women who officiate on the courts, fields and ice by passing laws to protect them.

NASO has been bringing attention to assault, liability and independent contractor issues for years. The map, updated for 2019, displays the states that have passed laws dealing with those issues. There are currently 21 states that have officiating assault laws (including 19 with criminal laws and two with civil statutes), 16 with limited liability legislation and 14 states with independent contractor laws. In addition, two states – Idaho, Washington and Missouri – have supportive resolutions for sports officials. How does your state match up with others? If there is work to be done, consider getting involved in pushing for legislation.

## Pass Legislation in Your State

Since 1984, when NASO first submitted model legislation regarding assaults against officials, members and legislators have used such models to construct their own legislative bills.

There is no fool-proof plan to get the job done. Each state handles legislation differently, and it is up to the local constituency to manage the process effectively. It is NASO's goal that individual members utilize the proposed legislative models and work with their local officials associations and local legislators to construct viable laws. Before you do anything else, it's a good idea to do some research. Request an NASO Assault Legislation Packet and visit [naso.org](http://naso.org). Contact your state government to



find out what specific legislation is in place. And if your state does not have needed laws supporting officials, you can get involved.

### 1. Contact your local association.

Share with your association what other states have done in terms of legislation. Move forward united. You can also work to get other officials associations in the area or your state association to back your cause.

**2. Circulate a petition.** Ask members of your association and area officials associations to sign a

petition asking lawmakers to take action.

**3. Gather information.** Gather and present information to legislators about incidents that have happened in your state that apply, such as officiating assaults, etc.

**4. Get on the phone or internet.** Contact your legislators and meet with them to present information that may help to pass the legislation.

**5. Follow up and don't give up.** After talking and meeting with your legislators, follow up with a thank you letter and tell them that

you will follow their progress. Keep the topic in the forefront. Even if a proposed bill doesn't pass the first time, it doesn't mean it won't pass in the future. Take time to gather more support and continue to pursue the legislation at the next opportunity.

## Assault Legislation Information Available Online

For the latest legislation information, visit [naso.org](http://naso.org). You will find legislation statuses in each state, information about model legislation and specific state assault legislation.

## Ohio Pursues Officials Assault Legislation

Ohio lawmakers are considering bipartisan legislation that would increase the penalty for assaults against sports officials. Two companion bills, House Bill 208 and Senate Bill 118, would raise the penalty for assaulting an official while on the job from a misdemeanor to a fifth-degree felony, punishable by up to a year in prison and a \$2,500 fine. SB 118 is sponsored by Sen. Kristina Roegner and HB 208 by

Reps. Bill Roemer, a longtime baseball umpire, and Joe Miller, a longtime basketball referee.

The protection the bills are calling for is already given to school teachers, correctional officers, firefighters, health care professionals and more.

Roemer said the bill is supported by Ohio High School Athletic Association Executive Director Jerry Snodgrass, as well associations.

SB 118 was introduced on March 26 and then referred to the judiciary committee. HB 208 was introduced April 18 and referred to the criminal justice committee. No additional actions have taken place, as of presstime.

## Louisiana Bill Aims to Protect Officials

Louisiana is one of the states that has a law which calls for tough penalties against those who physically attack sports officials. However, one legislator is pushing to show more support for officials. Protecting officials from harassment and threats is the focus of a bill filed in Louisiana in March.

State Rep. Cameron Henry (R-Metairie) crafted the legislation, which would subject offenders to fines and jail time. The penalty would apply to anyone whose actions cause a school or recreational game official to "fear for safety" during an event or near the venue.

Violators would face a fine of up to \$500 and a maximum of 90 days imprisonment, as well as 40 hours of community service and mandatory counseling.

Henry told KLFY.com that it's often high school and college student officials on the receiving end of a parent's anger.

"These kids are getting threatened, our young adults are getting threatened by parents in the stadium of physical violence over a bad call for a 10-year-old's baseball game," he said. "It is absurd, it is ridiculous that we even have to have this conversation." ■

**Go to [naso.org](http://naso.org) to download and share a pdf of this year's map.**