

# SPORTS OFFICIALS LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

Has your state passed laws related to assault and/or harassment of sports officials, officials' liability and independent contractor status? State laws criminalizing attacks and harassment of officials serve as a deterrent and tell prosecutors, judges and juries that such acts are to be taken seriously. Limited liability laws are an added protection to exempt officials (sometimes only volunteer officials) from liability for injuries unless they are grossly negligent. Independent contractor laws classify officials as such – at least for the purposes of workers' compensation.

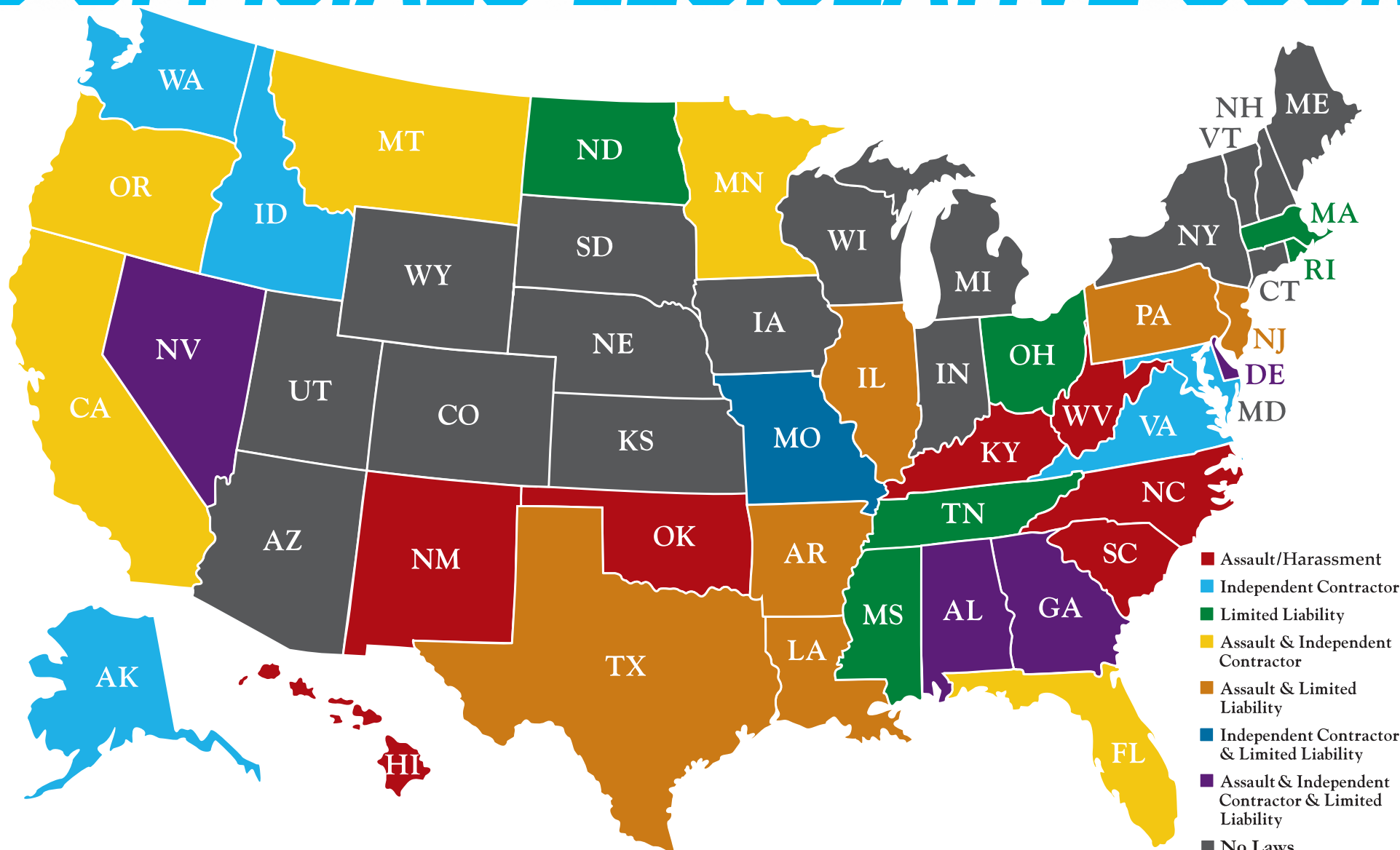
While the scope of state legislation varies, sports officials should be able to perform their duties without threat of personal injury, administrative hearings or litigation because of their game calls. State legislators can show support for those who officiate by passing laws to protect them.

NASO has been bringing attention to assault/harassment, liability and independent contractor issues for years. The map, updated for 2021, displays the states that have passed laws dealing with those issues. There are currently 22 states that have officiating assault and/or harassment laws (including 20 with criminal laws and two with civil statutes), 17 with limited liability legislation and 15 states with independent contractor laws. In addition, three states – Idaho, Washington and Missouri – have supportive resolutions for officials. How does your state match up? 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 associations and 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).

## Legislation Updates

Following are 2021 state legislative efforts and the status of the bills as of press time (see "NASO

Supports State Legislation Efforts" on pg. 6 for information about the assistance NASO has provided in select states).

**Connecticut** – SB 1088 was introduced to create an enhanced penalty for assault of a sports official. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Judiciary and had a public hearing on March 31, but the bill died in committee.

**Kentucky** – HB 89, introduced in the House on Jan. 5, creates a

new section of KRS Chapter 518 to create the crime of intimidation of a sports official as a Class A misdemeanor. The bill was sent to the House Judiciary committee on Jan. 13. The bill passed 78-9 in the House on Feb. 19. It was sent to the Senate Judiciary committee on Feb. 22.

**Maryland** – SB 0028, primarily sponsored by Sen. Obie Patterson, called for enhanced protections for sports officials. However, the bill was defeated by the Maryland

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee following a Jan. 20 hearing.

**Michigan** – HB 4572 was introduced by Rep. Gary Eisen on March 24 and then referred to the Committee on Rules and Competitiveness. The bill seeks to establish sentencing guidelines for the crime of assaulting a sports official.

**New York** – SB 5911, sponsored by Sen. Mike Martucci, was

introduced on March 22 and then sent to the Senate Codes Committee. The bill would make the intentional causing of physical injury to a sports official a class D felony of assault in the second degree and create a class B misdemeanor of aggravated harassment of a sports official when a person, with intent to annoy, harass, threaten or alarm a sports official, strikes or expectorates on an official.

**Ohio** – HB 44 seeks to amend section 2903.13 of the Revised Code to increase the penalties for assault if the victim is acting as a sports official or the assault is committed in retaliation for the victim's actions as a sports official. The bill, sponsored by several representatives, was introduced on Feb. 4 and then referred to the Criminal Justice Committee. The committee had a third hearing for the bill on April 22.

**Texas** – SB 619 and HB 2721, sponsored by Rep. Eddie Lucio III, are identical bills which seek to prohibit a student from participating in future extracurricular activities for certain conduct involving the assault of an extracurricular activity official. The bills were introduced in February and March and referred to Education Committees.

**Virginia** – HB 1791, sponsored by Rep. Joseph McNamara, was introduced on Jan. 1. The bill, which sought to upgrade penalties for those who assault sports officials, was defeated by the Courts of Justice Committee on Feb. 5.

**Wisconsin** – Wisconsin AB 158, introduced in March, calls for harassment made against a sports official to become a Class A misdemeanor. The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee and a public hearing was held for it on April 15.

Go to [naso.org](http://naso.org) for the latest legislation information and to download a pdf of this year's map.