

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 game calls. State legislators can show support for officials 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 2023, 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.

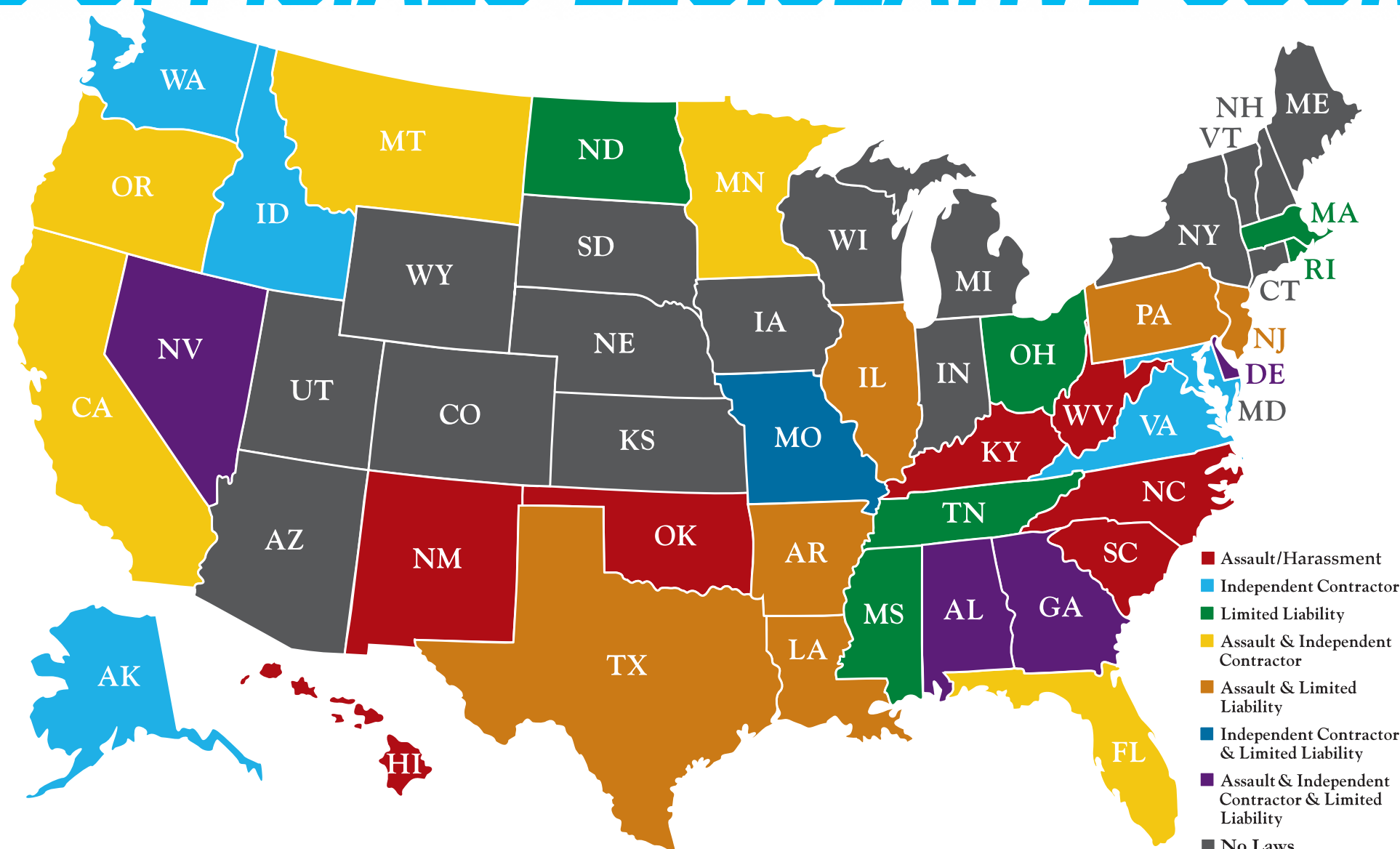
Pass Legislation in Your State

Since 1984, when NASO first submitted model legislation regarding assaults against officials, 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. Before you move forward, do some research. Request an NASO Assault Legislation Packet and visit naso.org.

Legislation Updates

A record number of states pursued officiating legislation in 2023. Here are the highlights:



Arkansas Passes Protection Law – HB 1496, concerning abuse of an official, was signed into law in Arkansas March 30. Now Act 420, the law enhances penalties for assault and harassment: 1) A Class B felony will be charged to a person whose purpose is to cause serious physical injury to an official and causes serious physical injury. 2) A person who causes serious physical injury with the intent to cause physical injury is guilty of a Class C felony. 3) Someone who causes physical injury to an official with the

purpose of causing physical injury is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. 4) A person who purposely “creates apprehension of imminent physical injury in an official” is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

Hawaii Legislation Goes to the Governor – Hawaii HB 264 was submitted to the governor April 28 after passing in the House and Senate. It makes intentionally or knowingly causing injury to an official a Class C felony and authorizes a court to enjoin the offender from attending any sports

event of the type at which the sports official was engaged.

Connecticut – HB 6428 and HB 6429 were referred to the Judiciary Committee Jan. 23. HB 6428 makes assault of an official a misdemeanor. HB 6429 calls for the statutes to include protections for officials.

Iowa – SF 521 was introduced March 6. The Iowa State Senate passed the bill out of subcommittee 3-0 with bipartisan support for making it a felony to assault a sports official. However, this bill did not make the second funnel deadline.

Kansas – HB 2139 creates the crime of abuse of a sports official and provides criminal penalties. The bill was introduced Jan. 23. On March 20, it was re-referred to the Committee on Education.

Kentucky – HB 314 was introduced Feb. 15 and assigned to the Committee on Committees. The bill makes intimidation of a sports official a Class A misdemeanor.

Massachusetts – HB 1407, HB 1427, HB 1475, HB 1753, and HB 1825 were introduced and referred to the Joint Committee on the

Judiciary Feb. 16. The bills call for enhanced penalties for assault and/or harassment of sports officials.

Minnesota – SF 1666 was referred to the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Feb. 16. The bill calls for enhanced penalties for assaulting a sports official.

Mississippi – HB 758 added officials to persons to which assault is elevated to aggravated assault. The bill died in committee Jan. 31.

Missouri – HB 72, HB 108, HB 256 and SB 524 were introduced to expand special victims to include officials. HB 108 also limits liability. The Rules-Regulatory Oversight Committee passed HB 108 on April 24. SB 524 was referred to committee March 23, and HB 72 and HB 256 were referred to committee May 12.

New Jersey – AB 4444 was introduced in 2022. The bill, which upgrades certain assault against officials to aggravated assault, was passed by the Assembly March 30. No other action was taken.

New York – AB 2510, which establishes the crime of assault on officials and makes aggravated harassment of a official a Class B misdemeanor, was referred to the Codes Committee Jan. 26.

Pennsylvania – HB 297 was referred to the Judiciary Committee March 10. The bill would amend statutes to provide for the offense of harassment of sports official.

Tennessee – SB 110 was introduced Jan. 12. The bill, increasing the penalty for assault against an official, was referred to the Judiciary Committee before it was withdrawn on Jan. 20.

Texas – HB 2484, introduced March 13, bans a spectator from attending future UIL events if they attack an official. The bill was passed by the House and is in the Senate.

Washington – HB 1096, introduced in January, adds officials to protected groups, making assaults on officials a Class C felony. The bill was referred to the Community Safety, Justice & Reentry Committee. ■

Go to naso.org for the latest legislation information and to download a PDF of this year's map.