

Connecticut Public Act 26-14

Formerly known as Senate Bill 397

Policy Analysis & Fact Sheet



When communities organize, advocate, and demand accountability, **change is possible**. Connecticut Public Act 26-14, signed into law on May 4, 2026, **represents a major step forward for civil rights, police accountability, government transparency, immigrant protections, and safeguards on surveillance technology** in Connecticut.

What does this new law do?

1. It creates a new way to hold government officials accountable for rights violations.

The law allows people in Connecticut to **sue federal government officials in court if their constitutional rights are violated**.

◦ **What this means:**

- If a federal or state official violates someone's rights - for example, through an unconstitutional arrest or enforcement action - the person harmed can now file a lawsuit against them.
- To grant relief, the court can order federal officials:
 - To pay money damages to the person harmed; and
 - To stop the illegal conduct.
- The court may also award attorneys' fees and legal costs to attorneys who successfully bring a case on behalf of a person whose rights were violated.

The law is **modeled after existing federal civil rights law and creates a new pathway for people to hold federal officials accountable**. This is especially important at a time when the federal government is increasingly engaging in aggressive enforcement actions, while people have very limited options to seek accountability when federal officials violate their constitutional rights.

2. It limits civil immigration arrests in sensitive locations without a judicial warrant.

Beginning October 1, the law **prohibits law enforcement officers, including federal officers like ICE agents, from detaining, arresting, or taking someone into custody for a civil immigration matter in certain protected areas** unless they have a judicial warrant signed by a judge. This creates boundaries on how immigration enforcement, which is set by the federal government, can be conducted here in our home state.

◦ **What this means:**

- People generally cannot be taken into custody for civil immigration enforcement in many places they rely on for safety, care, education, worship, or essential services unless officers have a judicial warrant.
 - Protected areas include:
 - schools, ranging from preschools to colleges or universities
 - licensed hospitals or urgent care centers
 - places of worship or religious study
 - social service establishments, such as crisis centers and shelters, supervised visitation or family justice centers, victim services centers, food banks or pantries, or substance counseling and treatment facilities
 - places for disaster or emergency response and relief, including supply distribution sites, disaster-related assistance registration sites, or sites that reunite families

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What does this new law do? [cont.]

- cemeteries
- playgrounds, recreation or childcare centers, before or after school care centers, foster care facilities, group homes for children, or school bus stops when children are there
- The law also **applies protections to state and municipal government buildings, including the parking lots and grounds connected to them.**
- If someone's rights are violated under this law because they are detained, arrested, or taken into custody while in a protected area, they **can sue in court.** Courts may order:
 - money damages to the person harmed
 - an order stopping the unlawful conduct
 - attorneys' fees and court costs to attorneys who successfully bring a case on behalf of a person whose rights were violated

This is important because many people **rely on schools, hospitals, shelters, and places of worship for critical support**, and fear of enforcement actions in those spaces has widespread impacts on families and communities.

3. It creates statewide rules for license plate reader surveillance.

Automatic license plate readers ("ALPRs") are cameras that continuously snap images of license plates. With so many throughout the state, the data they collect can be used to track a person's movements over time. This law **sets strict rules on how police can use ALPR data and prohibits using it to target immigrants, protesters, or people seeking certain healthcare.**

- **What this means:**

- Officers can **only use ALPR data for specific, limited purposes** like finding missing people, recovering stolen vehicles, or active criminal investigations. Data **generally must be deleted within 21 days** unless tied to an active case.
- The law **explicitly prohibits using ALPR data to:**
 - **Investigate suspected immigration violations** or assist with immigration enforcement
 - Target people **based on race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, gender identity, or other protected characteristics**
 - Investigate or prosecute anyone for **seeking or providing reproductive or gender-affirming health care** that is legal in Connecticut
 - Monitor people **engaged in constitutionally protected activities** like protests
- ALPR data **cannot be shared with federal agencies** unless they have a court-issued warrant based on probable cause for the specific data, meaning ICE or other federal agencies cannot simply request bulk access to Connecticut license plate reader data.
- Officers who maliciously misuse ALPR data **can face suspension or lose their police certification.** The Attorney General can sue private companies that violate the law. People harmed by violations committed by public agencies can file a lawsuit.
- Agencies must also **publish annual public reports on how they use ALPR systems**, creating an ongoing transparency and accountability requirement.

Without clear guardrails, ALPR data can be shared and used in ways Connecticut residents never consented to. This law helps **ensure that powerful surveillance technology is not weaponized against Connecticut residents** for exercising their legal rights or simply going about their daily lives.

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Additional Notable Items from P.A. 26-14:

- **Expands the Attorney General's (AG) Power to Protect Civil Rights**
 - The law **expands the Connecticut Attorney General's authority to investigate and take legal action when government officials or institutions violate people's civil rights.**
 - What this means:
 - The AG can now take action **even if a rights violation has happened only once** if it results from an official policy or practice.
 - The AG can also now act when someone uses government authority, or appears to be acting with government authority, to violate a person's state or federal constitutional rights. The AG can, for example, bring a claim against a police officer whose actions violate the equal protection clauses of either the Connecticut or federal constitution.
 - When the AG brings one of these cases, the court must hold a hearing within 5 days and may immediately order the unlawful conduct to stop while the case moves forward.
 - By empowering the state AG to act quickly and broadly and reinforcing the state AG's responsibility to enforce these accountability measures, Connecticut is **creating a strong state-level check to protect residents' rights when federal actors overstep.**
- **Expands Investigations Into Deaths Caused by Law Enforcement Use of Force**
 - The law **strengthens Connecticut's ability to investigate deaths caused by law enforcement use of force**, including deaths involving federal law enforcement officers. This is important because independent investigations help promote transparency and accountability when someone dies during or after an encounter.
 - What this means:
 - If someone dies after law enforcement uses force against them, or dies while in physical custody, the Connecticut Inspector General must investigate what happened and determine whether the use of force was justified. The law expands these investigations to cover a broader range of federal law enforcement officers, not just local or state police.
 - Investigators must be given full access to:
 - the scene of the incident
 - evidence connected to the investigation
 - If anyone refuses to provide access, the state can ask a court to order compliance.
 - After an investigation, the Inspector General can **issue public findings and recommendations** for the law enforcement agency involved.
- **Restricts Law Enforcement from Concealing Their Identity**
 - The law **requires peace officers, including federal law enforcement officers acting in Connecticut, to show their face and display their name and badge when interacting with the public or making arrests.** Intentionally violating either rule is a criminal misdemeanor.
 - What this means:
 - Officers generally cannot wear masks, balaclavas, tactical face coverings, or other disguises that hide their identity during public interactions or arrests. Violating this ban can result in a fine of up to \$250, up to 30 days in jail, or both.
 - Officers must wear a visible badge and name tag on their outer uniform whenever they are making a planned arrest or interacting with the public in an official capacity.

Additional Notable Items from P.A. 26-14: [cont.]

- *There are limited exceptions.* An officer can conceal their face in certain instances, such as to wear a medical mask for health and safety, protect against chemical or biological agents, or perform water rescues. An officer is also not required to display their name and badge in certain circumstances, such as during undercover assignments or when weather-related events prevents them from doing so.
- This is **directly responsive to incidents across the country where masked, unidentified federal agents detained people without clear legal authority.** This law helps people know who they interacting with when they are confronted by law enforcement in Connecticut, whether those officers are state police officers or federal officials.
- **Protects the Right to Record Police**
 - The law **extends existing protections for people's right to record law enforcement to include federal officers.**
 - What this means:
 - If a federal law enforcement officer illegally interferes with someone recording police activity in Connecticut, the federal agency can now be held liable.
 - If an officer falsely arrests, assaults, or maliciously prosecutes someone while trying to stop them from recording, the officer cannot use certain immunity defenses in a civil lawsuit.
 - The right to record police is one of the most important tools the public has to document misconduct. This provision **ensures that the right applies equally whether the officer has a state badge or a federal one.**
- **Closes a Police Hiring Loophole**
 - Currently, Connecticut law enforcement agencies cannot hire officers who were fired for misconduct or who quit while under investigation for misconduct. This law **extends that ban to include federal law enforcement officers.**
 - What this means:
 - Law enforcement agencies cannot hire any officer, including federal officers moving to local departments, who was fired for serious misconduct, or who resigned or retired while under investigation for serious misconduct, unless the officer was fully exonerated.
 - This **closes a potential loophole where officers with serious federal misconduct histories** could simply move into state or local law enforcement roles in Connecticut.
- **Strengthens Police Training Requirements**
 - The law **ensures that all peace officers, including federal law enforcement officers, meet Connecticut's basic police training requirements.**
 - What this means:
 - Previously, the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) could waive parts of training for officers with experience elsewhere. Now, POSTC cannot waive any part of the requirement unless the officer completed a substantially equivalent training program with at least 480 hours of instruction. Even then, POSTC is not required to grant the waiver.
 - This helps ensure that officers serving in Connecticut meet consistent training standards and cannot bypass them just because they previously worked in another agency or jurisdiction.