

# IT'S OFFICIAL

APRIL 2021

## NASO SUPPORTS LEGISLATION EFFORTS

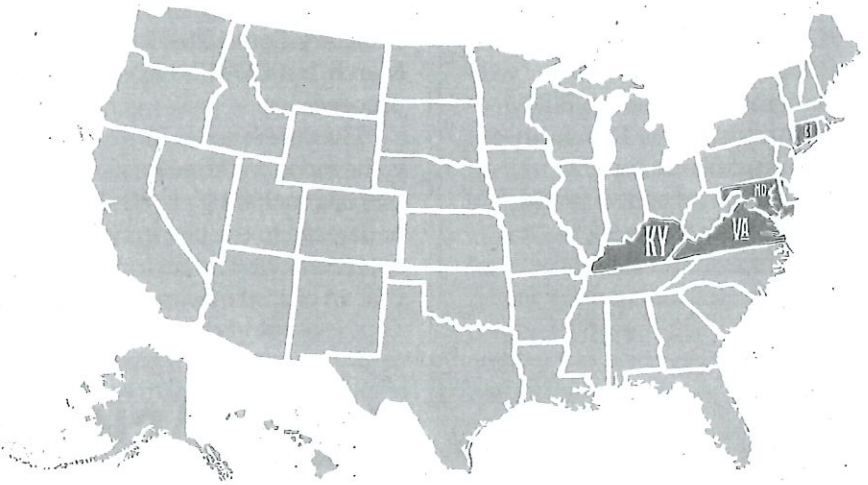
**A**s many states began new legislative sessions in January, general assemblies in Maryland, Virginia, Connecticut and Kentucky introduced legislation to protect officials for 2021 and other states prepared to do the same.

Despite efforts by NASO and others, the Maryland bill was defeated early on by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in a 7-3 vote following a Jan. 20 hearing.

Maryland Senate Bill 0028, primarily sponsored by Sen. Obie Patterson, had called for enhanced protections for officials by "... authorizing a police officer to arrest a person without a warrant if the police officer has probable cause to believe that the person has committed a certain assault ..."

In early January, NASO sent a press release to NASO members in Maryland urging them to send written testimony (via email) to the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in advance of the bill hearing.

T.C. Cameron, a member of the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials' Board 12, gave in-person testimony to the committee during the virtual hearing held via Zoom – recalling an experience where he was assaulted after officiating a college baseball game in South Bend, Ind., in 2006.



"I was chased off the field by 35 college baseball players – some of them swinging bats – and I was penned in between the field and my dressing room by these players and a parent who had run 300 feet to trap me," he said. "I feared for my life."

Michael Schilpp, president of the Baltimore Best Umpires group, gave an example where despite video of an umpire being physically assaulted, a police officer could not take action due to a loophole in the law.

"The officer could only write an incident report because he did not witness the assault," Schilpp told the committee.

While the latest Maryland bill died in committee, legislation in other states is still pending.

Virginia House Bill 1791 – introduced on Jan. 13 – offers protections for officials, making an assault against a sports official a Class 1 misdemeanor. The

proposed bill, if enacted, would carry a mandatory minimum fine of \$500 and the offender would be barred from entering within 50 feet of any location hosting a sporting event held in the Commonwealth from one hour prior to the event until one hour after the event for one year.

The bill goes even further to protect sports officials from threats as the bill carries the same penalty for any person "to orally make a threat to kill or do bodily injury to any sports official" during or immediately before or after the event. The proposed bill would classify threatening a sports official with bodily harm as a Class 1 misdemeanor as well.

NASO member Barry Chasen is pushing for legislation in Connecticut. He contacted Connecticut State Sen. John Kissel in an effort to encourage him to pursue assault legislation.



Chasen cited an incident last summer where an adult league baseball player attacked an umpire after disagreeing with a call. The umpire was hospitalized. Chasen also recalled being threatened at a summer league baseball game years ago but was fortunate nothing came of it.

He contacted NASO and NASO President Barry Mano wrote a letter in support of legislation.

Connecticut lawmakers drafted two bills to provide added protection. House Bill 5558, introduced by Rep. John Hampton, calls for general statutes to be amended to add sports officials to the list of victims of assault for which there is an elevated penalty for

committing assault. Senate Bill 526, introduced by Kissel and Sen. Kevin Witkos, calls for the general statutes to establish the crime of assault upon a sports official. Both bills were referred to the Joint Committee on Judiciary in late January.

Kentucky House Bill 89 (2021) is an identical version of House Bill 65 (2020) that was passed 92-4 in the Kentucky House before stalling out in the Senate Judiciary Committee in mid-March, but COVID-19 slowed proceedings.

The difference in Kentucky is the focus on intimidation of officials, including physical injury or damage to the property of a sports official. The act includes that an official must not be

subject to "physical confinement or restraint" or actions "intended to substantially harm the sports official's health, safety or business or financial interests."

In 1998, Kentucky passed assault legislation as a Class A misdemeanor, but the proposed bill would strengthen current law.

As of press time, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania were also in the early stages of pursuing legislation.

NASO remains available to support legislation efforts in any state. For more information on legislation involving officials, to keep up-to-date with legislation efforts or for ideas on how to pursue assault legislation in your state, visit NASO's resource page [naso.org/resources/legislation](http://naso.org/resources/legislation). ■

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#### NASO MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of NASO is to:

- Serve members by providing benefits and services.
- Improve officiating performance through educational programs.
- Advocate opportunities for officials and engage in programs to recruit and retain officials.
- Create alliances with organizations that benefit from healthy officiating programs.
- Enhance the image of officials.

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## NASO BACKS MIBT MEDIA VIRTUAL HOLIDAY FUNDRAISER

**M**IBT (Make It Be There) Media's Tim Kiefer worked to put together a positive ending to 2020 after a trying year all around.

Kiefer, the company's president, hosted a virtual holiday party on Dec. 16, 2020, via multiple streaming platforms in which a fundraiser during the online event raised \$1,722 for UMPS CARE Charities, an organization founded through the compassion of MLB umpires to provide financial, in-kind and emotional support for America's youth and families in need.

NASO supported this effort by contributing \$1 for every text received by MIBT's hotline number during the event. NASO pledged up to \$500 and the maximum pledge was reached with MIBT receiving

722 messages. MIBT contributed \$722 and Officially Connected chipped in \$500 as well.

"When Tim reached out to us to help promote his Virtual Holiday Party, I thought it was a great idea," said Dan Olson, Referee/NASO director of audience development. "With so much of our officiating lives taking place over video this past year, it made a lot of sense to cap the year off with something like this. When we heard MIBT Media was partnering with our friends at UMPS CARE Charities for the event, we wanted to get more involved. We thought that contributing matching funds in addition to promotional assistance made a lot of sense."

"As an organization, because of it's been a tough year for