

STATE OF NEW YORK

8500--B

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

September 10, 2025

Introduced by Sens. MYRIE, FAHY, FERNANDEZ, GIANARIS, GONZALEZ, GOUNARDES, HINCHEY, KAVANAGH, LIU, MAY, MAYER, RAMOS, RIVERA, C. RYAN, SALAZAR, SANDERS, STAVISKY, WEBB -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- recommitted to the Committee on Codes in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the civil rights law, in relation to enacting the New York Civil Rights Act

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New York
2 Civil Rights Act".

3 § 2. The civil rights law is amended by adding a new article 8-A to
4 read as follows:

ARTICLE 8-A

THE NEW YORK CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Section 85. Action for deprivation of constitutional rights.

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8 § 85. Action for deprivation of constitutional rights. 1. Legislative
9 intent. The people of the State of New York must be guaranteed meaning-
10 ful remedies, including but not limited to those provided through the
11 courts, when their constitutional rights are violated. Recent United
12 States Supreme Court decisions have curtailed the availability of such
13 remedies under Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents, repeatedly declining
14 to extend damages actions to new contexts and leaving many victims of
15 constitutional violations without recourse. Concurrently, the Federal
16 Tort Claims Act (FTCA), as amended by the Westfall Act, provides the
17 exclusive avenue for many common-law damages actions against federal
18 officers acting within the scope of their employment. These developments

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 have created a significant remedial void for New Yorkers injured by
2 unconstitutional conduct.

3 Therefore, the legislature finds it necessary to provide an avenue for
4 claims for damages against any federal, state, or local official, who,
5 acting under color of any federal, state, or local law, deprives a
6 person of rights secured by the United States Constitution. The West-
7 fall Act explicitly carves out from the FTCA's exclusive purview "a
8 civil action against an employee of the Government which is brought for
9 a violation of the Constitution of the United States." 28 U.S.C. §
10 2679(b)(2)(A). The plain text of this provision contains no limitation
11 on the scope of constitutional violations carved out from the FTCA's
12 exclusive purview, recognizing the well-established principle that
13 government agents act outside of the scope of their offices when they
14 violate the Constitution. The legislature intends for this statute to
15 fall squarely within that provision.

16 This article does not, nor is intended to, usurp federal authority.
17 Nor does it discriminate against federal officials. This statute under-
18 scores the supremacy of the federal Constitution by ensuring that its
19 guarantees remain enforceable for all New Yorkers against all persons
20 acting under color of any law. From the Founding era through the nine-
21 teenth century, courts regularly entertained state law suits against
22 federal officers who exceeded lawful authority. Nothing in the Constitu-
23 tion, federal statutes, or United States Supreme Court precedent fore-
24 closes such actions today. The legislature thus finds that New York
25 State may properly act to safeguard its residents' constitutional
26 rights.

27 The intent of this statute is to restore a meaningful avenue of
28 accountability consistent with federal supremacy, sovereignty, and the
29 long-standing principle that rights must be paired with remedies.

30 2. Definition. As used in this section, "color of any law, statute,
31 ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage" includes color of any statute,
32 ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of the United States and of any
33 State or Territory or District of Columbia.

34 3. Liability. Any person who, under color of any law, statute, ordi-
35 nance, regulation, custom, or usage, subjects, or causes to be
36 subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the
37 jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or
38 immunities secured by the Constitution of the United States, shall be
39 liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or
40 other proper proceeding for redress, except that in any action brought
41 against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such offi-
42 cer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless
43 declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable.

44 4. Remedies. In any action brought under this section, the court may
45 award:

46 (a) compensatory damages, including damages for emotional distress,
47 pain and suffering, and other non-economic damages;

48 (b) punitive damages where the violation is found to be malicious,
49 wanton, willful, or in reckless disregard of the plaintiff's rights;

50 (c) injunctive and declaratory relief;

51 (d) reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to a prevailing plaintiff;
52 and

53 (e) expert fees as part of the reasonable attorneys' fees.

54 § 3. Severability. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part
55 of this act shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to
56 be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the

1 remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause,
2 sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part thereof directly
3 involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been
4 rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the legislature that
5 this act would have been enacted even if such invalid provisions had not
6 been included herein.

7 § 4. This act shall take effect immediately.