



NELP Criminal Records Bulletin February 2015

FAIR CHANCE - BAN THE BOX

Federal Fair Chance Hiring Initiative

On January 22nd, advocacy groups launched an initiative urging President Obama to take executive action to ensure that employment opportunities with federal agencies and contractors are open to qualified job-seekers with arrests or convictions in their past. The initiative is being jointly organized by All of Us or None, the PICO National Network, and the National Employment Law Project (NELP).

In the report, "[Advancing a Federal Fair Chance Hiring Agenda](#)," NELP makes the case for federal action that builds on the momentum in the [13 states, the District of Columbia, and the 96 cities and counties](#) that have adopted "ban the box" and other fair chance hiring measures. The groups have also begun a [sign-on letter](#) for other organizations to show support—your group can join [here](#). Individuals can sign PICO's petition [here](#). See [press release](#). See [Washington Post story](#). See Jared Bernstein's [blog](#).

Progress for Fair Chance Hiring Reform in Tallahassee, FL and Allentown, PA

On January 28th, the city of **Tallahassee**'s city commissioners approved a fair hiring policy 3-2 for the city. Now applicants would not be required to reveal criminal record information upfront. Of the 816 criminal background screenings that were conducted in 2014, excluding those for public safety jobs, 15 percent had criminal histories. Of that 15 percent, 11 percent were hired and 4 percent were denied, based on the nature of their background as it applied to positions. See [article](#).

In **Allentown, Pennsylvania**, the mayor in his state of the city address on January 29th committed to ending the practice of asking city job candidates whether they've ever been convicted. The change is one the mayor can make administratively and will likely go into effect within the month once city forms are reprinted. Allowing every person to go through an interview process levels the playing field, the mayor said. See [article](#).

In **Tampa, Florida**, the city council members have been considering whether to extend their fair hiring policies to contractors. If the city does adopt the policy, it would join a trend of “ban the box” policies that are now being applied to the private sector. See [article](#).

State Legislation For Fair Chance Hiring in Oregon and Virginia

An **Oregon** coalition of labor, civil rights, and community groups known as Fair Shot for All laid out their agenda publicly at a press conference Jan. 10. One central component of the state legislative package is “ban the box” legislation—other legislation includes a minimum wage increase, a paid sick leave law, racial profiling laws, and legislation to create a publicly sponsored retirement plan for workers. See [article](#). Meanwhile, a statewide bill in **Virginia** passes an initial hurdle by moving through a Senate policy committee. See [article](#).

RESEARCH

Even Jobseekers with Minor Arrests Still Face Employment Barriers

In the study “[The Edge of Stigma: An Experimental Audit of the Effects of Low-Level Criminal Records on Employment](#),” researchers sent matched pairs of African-American and white men to apply for entry-level jobs in Minnesota between 2007 and 2008. One of each pair had a sole arrest on their record for disorderly conduct. Those without arrests were about 4% more likely to get a callback. White men with a low-level record received a callback rate approximately 11% higher than African-American males with no record.

NEWS

Living with a record: How past crimes may drive job seekers into poverty

Applicants with criminal backgrounds, including those with nonviolent criminal convictions or even arrests, are increasingly being driven into poverty. Even if it has been years since they've served time for past criminal infractions, those applying for jobs are often unable to find work—especially in a climate of extreme job competition. See [PBS NewsHour](#).

Criminal Records Bulletin archive available for [2014](#), [2013](#), [2012](#).

NELP Criminal Records Bulletin January 2015

FAIR CHANCE - BAN THE BOX

NELP's Resource Guide is Updated for January 2015

NELP's [newest fair chance – ban the box guide](#) documents the 109 jurisdictions—the 13 states, Washington D.C., and the 95 cities and counties—that have taken steps to remove barriers to employment for qualified workers with records. See NELP's Maurice Emsellem's recent blog post on fair chance hiring at talkpoverty.org.

Syracuse, NY and Ulster County, NY—Closing out 2014 with a Fair Chance

On December 8th the **Syracuse** city council voted 8-1 to enact the Syracuse Fair Employment and Licensure Ordinance. The council president stated that "this legislation is probably the most important piece of legislation that we will all pass in our tenures in office from a civil rights and human rights perspective." See [ordinance](#) and the Center for Community Alternatives' [press release](#). See [article](#).

On December 16th the county executive of **Ulster County** signed the executive order to remove the conviction question. He commented that "if we are serious about fighting discrimination and bias, it is simply the right thing to do." See [executive order](#) and [press release](#).

Fair Chance Legislation for Private Employers

For the recently passed fair hiring ordinance in **Columbia, Missouri**, an [article](#) describes how private employers are adjusting their hiring practices. The Fair Chance Act in NYC had its first city council hearing on December 3rd. The de Blasio administration backs the push. See [article](#). See the campaign's [press release](#).

STATES

New Expungement Law in Minnesota in Effect

Minnesota's new criminal record expungement law, which took effect Jan. 1, will allow people with relatively minor rap sheets to petition a judge to have their criminal records sealed. See [news story](#).

Texas Considers Lifting Licensing Restrictions on People with Felonies

Research by Texas legislative committees shows that thousands of people are denied state licenses for well over 100 occupations because they have criminal records. In a bipartisan effort, the legislature is considering an overhaul of licensing rules. A ban the box law is also on

the table. See [article](#).

Expungement Bill in Michigan Passed; Awaiting Governor

Michigan legislators passed a second chance bill, which would allow people with low-level offenses to have certain convictions expunged. The [legislation](#) passed on December 18th with unanimous approval by the Senate and was presented to Governor Rick Snyder on January 2nd. See [article](#).

RESEARCH

One Strike and You're Out

The Center for American Progress released a [report](#), which offers a road map for the Obama administration and federal agencies, Congress, states and localities, employers, and colleges and universities to ensure that a criminal record no longer presents an intractable barrier to economic security and mobility. The [TalkPoverty.org blog](#) features several pieces on people with criminal records.

States Rethink Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction, 2009-2014

The Vera Institute's new [report](#) documents that 41 states and the District of Columbia have enacted 155 pieces of legislation to mitigate the collateral consequences for people with certain criminal convictions.

NEWS

Long After Arrests, Criminal Records Live On

Lois Jones sat dejected outside a courtroom. The 64-year-old's lawyer told her the court had left standing assault convictions from 1985. Her attorney told her the matter likely wouldn't come off her record for years, if ever. See WSJ [article](#). See the WSJ blog, [What to Know about Expungement of Criminal Records](#).

Criminal Records Bulletin archive available for [2014](#), [2013](#), [2012](#).