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CONTACT: Emma Stieglitz, [emmaS@berlinrosen.com](mailto:emmaS@berlinrosen.com), (646) 200-5307

## **Nebraska Becomes 1<sup>st</sup> Red State to “Ban the Box”; 11<sup>th</sup> State to Endorse Fair Hiring of People with Records**

***Georgia’s Republican Governor Pledges to Issue Executive Order, While Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, and 4 more states debate measures to give qualified applicants with convictions a fair chance to work***

**Washington, DC**—Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman today signed a significant criminal justice reform bill that includes a “ban the box” fair-hiring provision, making Nebraska the 11<sup>th</sup> state in the nation to remove questions about an applicant’s criminal record from state job applications. The move postpones such inquiries so that job-seekers can be reviewed on their qualifications first. The bill, which aims to reduce the prison population while improving public safety, passed the legislature 46-0.

Also this week, Republican Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia signed legislation to help the formerly incarcerated get back to work, while also pledging to issue an executive order offering job applicants with records a fair chance to be judged on their merits, not just their records. The governor’s spokesperson [told](#) the Times-Herald, “The governor will implement ban the box on the state level, and hope that the private sector follows suit. This will afford those with blemishes on their record a shot at a good job, which is key to preventing a return to crime.”

Seven other states, including Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida, and many cities around the country also are considering “ban the box” fair-hiring policies (the “box” refers to the check-box asking about convictions). Governors Heineman and Deal are not the first Republican governors to support a fair chance for workers with records. Governors Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota and Arnold Schwarzenegger of California adopted such policies in 2009 and 2010, respectively. The policy does not prohibit background checks, but only defers the inquiry to later in the hiring process.

To help advocates and policymakers tap into this national momentum and initiate fair-chance campaigns in their communities, today NELP released a [comprehensive online toolkit](#).

As more jurisdictions pursue “smart on crime” approaches and seek ways to expand economic opportunity, support for these fair-hiring policies is growing around the country, even among conservatives in an increasing number of red states.

In addition, the Louisiana Civil Service Commission is considering whether to remove the conviction question from most state job applications. Legislation is also pending in South Carolina, Florida, Delaware, Illinois, New Hampshire, and New Jersey. At the local level, the Louisville Metro Council

National Office  
75 Maiden Lane, Suite 601  
New York, NY 10038  
(212) 285-3025 tel  
(212) 285-3044 fax

[nelp@nelp.org](mailto:nelp@nelp.org) [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org)

Washington, DC Office  
1620 Eye Street NW, Suite 210  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 887-8202 tel  
(202) 785-8949 fax

California Office  
405 14th Street, Suite 1400  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 663-5700 tel  
(510) 663-2028 fax

Midwest Office  
3131 South State Street, Suite 302  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
(734) 369-5616 tel  
(866) 373-8994 fax

West Coast Office  
1225 S. Weller Street, Suite 435  
Seattle, WA 98144  
(206) 324-4000 tel  
(866) 882-5467 fax

unanimously passed a new law in March to remove the conviction question from job applications for the city and many of its 26,000 vendors. The bipartisan victory was praised as [“compassionate legislation”](#) by the mayor.

In Indiana, another red state, an [Indianapolis ordinance](#) applying to the city and vendors passed 26-2 in late February with the support of Republican Mayor Greg Ballard. In Nebraska, capturing the sentiment of fair-hiring supporters, Republican Mayor Jean Stothert of Omaha [stated](#), “Many of these applicants want and deserve a second chance and have the potential to be good employees.” The tally of jurisdictions that have adopted the fair-hiring policy is now up to [11 states](#) (with a few more on the verge) and almost [60 cities and counties](#). All told, NELP estimates that more than one third of the U.S. population now resides in a community where these fair-chance policies are in effect.

“This growing support in red states like Nebraska and Georgia to give workers a fair chance at employment is a breakthrough that should convince any elected official that it’s not just good policy, but it’s also good politics to find common ground in ways that strengthen our economy,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project.**

[Last year](#), the states of California, Maryland, Minnesota, and Rhode Island enacted legislation, and Illinois Governor Pat Quinn issued an executive order removing the background-check question from state applications. NELP’s comprehensive [new web-based resource](#) for fair-chance campaigns includes best practices, sample public education materials, model legislative language, media coverage, and other campaign resources.

*The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org).*

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