

Press Release

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Gov. Fallin Orders State Agencies to Remove Question about Felony Convictions from Job Appl

OKLAHOMA CITY – Governor Mary Fallin today signed an [executive order](#) directing state agencies to eliminate questions about prior felony convictions from employment applications.

“Employment after a felony conviction is always a challenge, but the ability to gain employment is a critical and necessary component in reducing recidivism and for those individuals to lead productive and successful lives,” said Fallin. “Thus, we should remove unnecessary barriers to employment opportunities for Oklahomans with felony convictions.

“State hiring policies should allow full and fair consideration of all applicants.”

Oklahoma joins 19 states and more than 100 cities and counties nationwide in removing barriers to employment for qualified workers with conviction records. Companies like Hobby Lobby, Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Tulsa’s Bama Companies Inc. have taken similar steps.

Statistics show that one in 12 Oklahomans is a convicted felon, with more than 55,000 people currently in prison or under the supervision of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, most for non-violent offenses.

Employment is an important factor in preventing recidivism and reducing the state’s prison population. Jobs also help people provide an income to support their families.

Fallin said the Oklahoma Justice Reform Steering Committee -- which includes a broad representation of policy makers, mental health professionals and re-entry experts -- has recommended removing questions about felony convictions from all job applications. Executive order 2016-03 applies only to state agencies, but the governor encourages private employers to consider the policy as well.

Such policies are supported by many local and national groups, including Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform, U.S. Justice Action Network, Right on Crime and the Koch brothers.

“This order is intended to provide state job applicants at least the initial opportunity for consideration for employment, an opportunity to discuss their criminal record and provide information that indicates rehabilitation, and allow applicants to be considered based upon their qualifications without the stigma of a conviction record,” said Fallin.

The governor’s order does not prevent agencies from conducting background checks on prospective employees or inquiring about applicants’ history during the interview process. It also does not prohibit agencies from excluding convicted felons from sensitive positions in certain convictions would be a cause for an immediate disqualification for the position.