

Georgia Governor Signs “Ban the Box” Executive Order

Peach State Becomes 1st in South, 14th Overall, to Give Qualified Job-Seekers with Convictions a Fair Chance to Work

Washington, DC— Georgia Governor Nathan Deal on Monday signed an [executive order](#) removing questions about criminal history from the initial application for state employment. Commonly known as “ban the box” (referring to the check-box asking about convictions), this fair-hiring provision postpones such inquiries until after applicants can be judged on their qualifications and skills. Georgia follows Nebraska as the second “red state” to implement the policy, joining California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Rhode Island in ensuring fair access to work. The executive order follows the Georgia legislature’s 2014 legislation easing barriers to hiring formerly incarcerated people.

“Governor Deal is to be commended for his commitment to lowering the barriers to opportunity for the millions of Georgians with criminal records seeking a second chance,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “With this common-sense hiring practice, applicants can be judged on their merits, rather than suffering a blanket exclusion based on just one check-box.”

Fair-chance hiring policies are gaining momentum and bipartisan support in every part of the country as lawmakers in both parties recognize that gainful employment is a critical element in limiting recidivism and increasing economic growth in their communities. In Georgia, a diverse coalition of advocates, including the Georgia Justice Project, 9to5 Atlanta, Atlantans Building Leadership for Empowerment, and faith leaders from throughout the state, have worked with policy makers to implement a number of new laws designed to reform the state’s criminal justice system.

“The Georgia Justice Project has been working for many years to improve employment opportunities for people with criminal histories, and it is exciting to see how much things have progressed,” said **Marissa McCall Dodson, policy director and attorney for the Georgia Justice Project**. “Not long after we sat down with Governor Deal to suggest he consider banning the box for state employment, he issued an executive order to make Georgia the first state in the South to do it!”

Georgia is the 14th state to implement a fair-chance policy, along with nearly 100 cities and counties and the District of Columbia. More than 100 million people now live in states where job applicants are judged on their merits, not just their criminal records. Several national companies, including Walmart, Target, Home Depot, and Bed Bath & Beyond, have similarly removed the conviction question from their initial application forms. To help advocates and policymakers take advantage of this momentum, NELP has released a comprehensive fair-chance [resource guide](#).

“Georgia’s new fair-hiring executive order shows that the state is leading the way in expanding opportunities for reentry by modelling best hiring practices for cities and counties and the private sector,” said **Owens**. “Ample access to a variety of jobs is critical for giving these workers a second chance, lifting the economic fortunes of their children and families, boosting the state’s overall economy, and improving underserved communities.”

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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.