

Expungement Reform Talking Points:

A criminal record is a substantial barrier to employment, housing and higher education:

In Wisconsin, nearly 1.4 million adults have a criminal record, including 42% of Milwaukee's job seekers.¹ People with criminal records often experience "collateral consequences" that haunt them well after they have paid their debt to society, it's much harder for someone with a criminal record to get jobs, home loans, or to join college or the military. Without access to these building blocks of financial independence and stability, they become stuck in a cycle of recidivism and dependence on public assistance.

With record-low levels of unemployment in Wisconsin and an aging workforce, employers and workforce leaders recognize that criminal justice reform can dramatically improve both the labor market and life outcomes for people with criminal records.

Expungement provides non-violent offenders with a fresh start – but Wisconsin's system needs dramatic reform:

Expungement means sealing a criminal record if the judge finds that the offender will benefit and society will not be harmed. When an eligible criminal record is expunged, it becomes sealed from public access records, such as Wisconsin Circuit Court Access, used by many employers to screen potential employees. This enables people with non-violent criminal backgrounds a fresh start after they've paid their debt to society.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin's system is out of touch with the rest of the nation:

- Wisconsin is the only state in the nation that:
 - Requires judges to determine eligibility when somebody is sentenced, instead of when they are released. This is the only time that expungement is possible in Wisconsin.
 - Does not permit expungement for closed cases, even if they meet all other criteria.
- Wisconsin is one of a couple states that:
 - Limit expungement eligibility to offenses that occur before age 25

Fortunately, there's broad, bipartisan support for common sense reforms to Wisconsin's expungement system:

Employers recognize that nonviolent offenders that have paid their debt to society deserve a fresh start. Employers that have removed questions about criminal offenses from their job applications include Koch Industries, Walmart, Target and Starbucks. While this is a great start, these represent only a handful of potential employment opportunities, and they are concentrated in too few sectors. Additionally, it should not be the responsibility of individual employers to solve

¹ Public Policy Forum. "Barriers to Employment. Who are Milwaukee's jobseekers?" October 2015



this issue. Wisconsin needs to create a legal solution that spans all industries, employers and residents.

Supporters of these bills included the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Americans For Prosperity, The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin and the State Bar of Wisconsin.

The Ask to Wisconsin's Legislature: Will you vote yes on Assembly Bill 69?
Will you vote yes on Senate Bill 78?

Sample Phone and Email Scripts

I am _____, a constituent who works/lives in your district. The strength of Wisconsin's economy is deeply important to me, and we need common sense reforms to our criminal justice system to sustain our recent economic success.

The fuel for Wisconsin's economy is a dependable labor pool. With a combination of record-low unemployment and an aging workforce, Wisconsin must maximize all sources of human capital. This includes groups that are underemployed, such as jobseekers with nonviolent criminal records. A 2015 report by the [Public Policy Forum](#) found that nearly 1.4 million adults in Wisconsin have a criminal record, including 42% of Milwaukee's job seekers.

A recent study by the [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#) finds that Wisconsin's system for expungement is out of step with national practices. Did you know that Wisconsin is the only state that decides if a sentence can be expunged before it starts? Or one of the only states that doesn't expunge non-acquittals? Reforming Wisconsin's expungement laws would reduce a common employment barrier among our dwindling pool of jobseekers.

Wisconsin's employers and pro-business groups like the Badger Institute and Americans For Prosperity recognize that criminal justice reforms can dramatically improve the labor market and reduce taxpayer dollars spent on criminal justice and social services, while also helping ex-offenders become functioning members of society.

I urge you to help grow our economy by supporting Assembly Bill 69 / Senate Bill 72.

Thank you.

I am _____, a constituent who works/lives in your district. It is deeply important to me that all of Wisconsin residents have equal opportunities to earn a family sustaining wage. This is why I support common sense reforms that will remove employment barriers for thousands of jobseekers with nonviolent criminal records.



A 2015 report by the [Public Policy Forum](#) found that nearly 1.4 million adults in Wisconsin have a criminal record, including 42% of Milwaukee's job seekers. Black men in Milwaukee are incarcerated at the [highest rate in the nation](#). This helps to explain why African American unemployment in the Milwaukee region is **13.8%**, compared to 2.7% for whites. [This is the largest gap of any American metropolitan area](#).

People with criminal records often face punishment well after they've served their time – obstacles that prevent them from getting a job, buying a home, joining the military or going to college. Expungement of criminal records is a useful strategy to help these people and their families move forward, but Wisconsin's system needs to be improved.

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I urge you to help create opportunity in our economy by supporting Assembly Bill 69 / Senate Bill 72.

Thank you,

Sample Social Media Posts:

A recent study by the [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#) finds that Wisconsin's system for expungement is out of step with national practices. Did you know that Wisconsin is the only state that decides if a sentence can be expunged before it starts? Or one of the only states that doesn't expunge non-acquittals? Reforming Wisconsin's expungement laws would reduce a common employment barrier among our dwindling pool of jobseekers.

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We can do better. Join me in supporting bipartisan reforms to Wisconsin's expungement system



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