

AFP-WI: Backs Expungement Reform Bill

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MADISON, Wis. – Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin (AFP-WI) on Tuesday joined with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Clean Slate Wisconsin, and other stakeholders at a press conference to announce support for a bipartisan expungement reform bill introduced by Sen. Alberta Darling (R), Sen. Fred Risser (D), Rep. David Steffen (R), and Rep. Evan Goyke (D). The bill makes smart reforms to Wisconsin's criminal justice system to help provide second chances to people who have paid their debt to society.

“Wisconsin should be a place where people who deserve second chances get them. Unfortunately, too few people in our state charged with low-level, nonviolent crimes get a fair shot at putting their lives back together after paying their debt to society. Expungement reform can help change that,” said AFP-WI State Director Eric Bott. “Many people with criminal records have needlessly limited access to employment, housing, and higher education, making it harder for them to get back on their feet and grow as contributing members of society. By giving judges greater discretion over whether a criminal record can be sealed, this bill would lower barriers to opportunity for people and would improve public safety, give people second chances, and help Wisconsinites improve their lives.”

Background:

Under current Wisconsin law, a court may a expunge a person's criminal record of a

crime if the person committed that crime before the age of 25, the person had not been previously convicted of a felony, the crime was not a violent felony, and the maximum term imprisonment for said crime is six years or less. Current law also allows that expungement orders can only be made at sentencing. Wisconsin is the only state that requires judges to determine expungement eligibility when somebody is sentenced, instead of when they are released, and is one of only 7 states that limits expungement opportunities based on people's age when they committed a crime.

The Pathways to Employment Act (LRB 1689/1) allows expungement eligibility for people sentenced over age 25, removes the expungement-ordered-at-sentencing requirement, and allows retroactive application of these reforms.