

# Badger Institute: Urges legislators to advance meaningful expungement reform

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Today, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature circulated a bill that would make meaningful changes to our state's expungement law. A [similar bill](#) passed the Assembly last session but never received a vote in the Senate. This time around, we urge the legislature to pass this commonsense, research-backed, bipartisan legislation.

Sponsored by Rep. [David Steffen](#) (R-Green Bay) and Rep. [Evan Goyke](#) (D-Milwaukee), the legislation would make it easier for offenders who committed a non-violent offense to receive an expungement - basically the sealing of a record after the sentence has been served.

Importantly, the legislation removes the restriction that only those 25 or younger are eligible. It also allows judges to determine eligibility for an expungement after the completion of a sentence rather than at the time of sentencing - a unique aspect of Wisconsin's law that is unlike any other in the country. The bill does not change which crimes are eligible to be expunged.

We've researched and written about this policy before and have found stark differences in the use of expungements among counties across the state, as well as disparities based on age and race of the defendant.

In our 2017 report, [Black Robes and Blue Collars: How to Let Wisconsin's Judges Help Job-Seekers and Employers](#), we wrote: "Ultimately, we hope to help policy-makers determine whether Wisconsin's expungement law should be altered and made more logical, equitable and effective in helping both low-level offenders find work and companies find employees."

This goal holds true today, and we believe, would be fulfilled through this legislation. We urge the Wisconsin legislature to pass this bill.

For more information on our work on this issue:

- [Criminal Justice Reform Recommendations for Wisconsin Policy-makers: Policy ideas from the Wisconsin Criminal Justice Coalition](#)
  - [Expungement reform would put people back to work](#)
  - [Testimony in support of expungement reform \(2019 SB39\)](#)
- [Black Robes and Blue Collars: How to let Wisconsin's judges help job-seekers and employers](#)