

Virginia Governor Signs “Ban the Box” Executive Order Birthplace of the Nation, 15th State Overall, to Give Qualified Job-Seekers with Convictions a Fair Chance to Work

Washington, DC— Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe signed an [executive order](#) today removing questions about conviction and arrest 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. It also ensures that state employment decisions will not be based on conviction history unless job-related.

Virginia follows Georgia as another significant state in the South to implement the policy, joining California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Rhode Island in ensuring fair access to work. The executive order follows state legislative efforts to “ban the box” that had stalled.

“We applaud Governor McAuliffe’s commitment to reducing employment barriers for the millions of Virginians that are seeking the opportunity to work and to contribute to their communities,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “This hiring practice is just common-sense; job seekers should be judged on their skills and qualifications, rather than being judged solely on a past mistake.”

At the signing of Executive Order 41, **Governor McAuliffe** said, “In a new Virginia economy, people who make mistakes and pay the price should be welcomed back into society and given the opportunity to succeed. This Executive Order will remove unnecessary obstacles to economic success for Virginians who deserve a second chance.” The Order cites the estimated 70 million people in the United States with arrests or convictions in their past and the vital importance that “every Virginian has a meaningful opportunity to compete for jobs in the Commonwealth.”

Virginia is the [15th state](#) to implement a fair-chance policy, along with [over 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 arrest and conviction records. Several national companies, including Walmart, Target, Home Depot, and Bed Bath & Beyond, have similarly removed the conviction question from their initial application forms.

Last week in a [letter](#) presented to the White House, nearly 200 civil rights, faith-based organizing, criminal justice, and social justice reform groups [called upon](#) President Obama to take immediate executive action to ensure that federal agencies and federal contractors remove unnecessary barriers to employment for people with records.

“The leadership in the South on fair-hiring reform demonstrates its bipartisan appeal; lawmakers are recognizing that gainful employment is a critical element in limiting recidivism and increasing economic growth in their communities,” said **Owens**. “Governors across the nation should take note. Likewise, Governor McAuliffe’s leadership should inspire the Obama Administration to take executive action to bring fair hiring reform to federal agencies and federal contractors.”

To help advocates and policymakers take advantage of the growing momentum, NELP has released a comprehensive [fair-chance toolkit](#).

###

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.