

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

For almost a decade, at the beginning of each new year, CCRC has published a report describing and evaluating record reforms enacted in the previous year. These are laws aimed at reducing the barriers faced by people with a criminal record in the workplace, at the ballot box, and in many other areas of daily life. Our reports have documented the steady progress of what we characterized five years ago as “a full-fledged law reform movement” aimed at restoring rights and status to individuals who have successfully navigated the criminal law system.

This modern American law reform movement responds to the circumstance that almost a third of adults in this country have a criminal record of some sort, exposing them to a broad web of legal restrictions without regard to actual risk of harm. The record reforms enacted in every U.S. jurisdiction reflect an unusually bipartisan recognition that consigning such a large segment of the population to a kind of “internal exile” is unfair, unsafe, and inefficient.

Our progress toward a fair and efficient criminal records policy has been uneven. Yet it has been steady, animated in recent years both by a concern for racial justice and by economic self-interest. This report, like our past annual reports, is another significant milestone on America’s way to recognizing the worth and dignity of the millions of Americans whose past includes a record of arrest or conviction.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are cautiously optimistic that even in an election year there will be a continuing expansion of eligibility for record clearing, and reduction of access barriers like lengthy waiting periods, outstanding court debt and application-related costs. We also predict efforts to improve records management to accommodate automation of record clearance. We look for further facilitation of occupational licensing, an area where bipartisan reforms have benefitted from helpful model laws, and for efforts to support entrepreneurship by people with a criminal history. We have come a long way in the past decade, but there is still a long way to go.

LAWS ENACTED SINCE 2019 HAVE RESULTED IN:

- More than half the states now allow people convicted of a felony to vote unless they are actually incarcerated.
- Most states now limit public access to at least some criminal records, with an increasing number making this relief automatic upon eligibility.
- Almost every state has laws to ensure that employers and licensing agencies do not discriminate based on a person’s criminal history.
- More than a dozen states have adopted the recommendations of our 2019 Model Law on Non-Conviction Records that dismissed charges be automatically expunged.
- Many states have expanded eligibility for court-managed diversion and deferred adjudication leading to expungement, responding to empirical research showing the efficacy of giving individuals an opportunity to avoid a felony conviction.
- Almost every state allows survivors of human trafficking to vacate their resulting convictions.

2025 Report on New Laws

This overview highlights key developments in record reforms from the past year. Following it, our annual legislative Report Card recognizes the most productive legislatures in 2025, noting that every U.S. jurisdiction has now enacted at least one law facilitating reentry and promoting reintegration since our reporting began in 2016. Most have enacted many. Detail and analysis of reform measures enacted in 2025 can be found in the state profiles from CCRC's Restoration of Rights Project, whose 50-state comparison charts provide a national overview of various types of record relief.

2025 IS THE MOST PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR RECORD REFORMS SINCE 2021

In 2025, 31 states enacted 83 separate pieces of legislation, and many others took executive action to restore rights and opportunities to people with an arrest or conviction history. At the end of the year, two significant additional bills had been enrolled by the Illinois legislature and by Congress, and were awaiting the expected signature of the chief executive.

2025 WAS A YEAR OF MEASURED CHANGE

As in recent years, half the new laws authorized record clearing. Because of how much progress has already been made in this area, many of the laws enacted in 2025 represented measured changes to existing record relief schemes rather than radical new ones. Still, the Illinois legislature approved what promises to be the broadest automatic sealing law in the country once it is signed by the governor as expected early in the New Year. Maryland, North Dakota, and Vermont significantly expanded eligibility for petition-based sealing, and a handful of states removed marijuana convictions from public view. Still other states trimmed barriers to relief by streamlining the application process, reducing waiting periods, or eliminating obstacles represented by outstanding court debt.

SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Congress joined the ranks of states that authorize vacatur and expungement for survivors of human trafficking, and several other states broadened the relief available to this population.

CONSIDERATION OF CRIMINAL RECORDS

Along with Alabama and Washington, Virginia also placed significant new limits on consideration of criminal record in employment and occupational licensing.

LIMITING THE LOSS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Virginia again took the first step toward amending its constitution to ensure that a felony conviction results in loss of the right to vote (and potentially other civil rights) only during actual incarceration.

STATEWIDE SYSTEMS OF SPECIAL PURPOSE COURTS

Alabama and Oregon organized statewide systems of special purpose courts to enable populations with special needs to obtain treatment and avoid a conviction record, and several other states expanded eligibility for diversionary dispositions.

More than two dozen other states enacted laws extending occupational licensing and fair chance employment, and improved both juvenile and adult record sealing laws. We were particularly pleased to see a number of improvements in diversion and deferred sentencing schemes, a subject we will be reporting on in 2026. All of the many new laws enacted in 2025 are described and analyzed in the relevant state profiles from the Restoration of Rights Project.

2025 Reintegration Champions

While half a dozen states enacted at least one noteworthy record reform in 2025, two states stand out for the quality and quantity of their new laws: Virginia and Alabama share our award as 2025 Reintegration Champions.

ALABAMA ENACTED FIVE SEPARATE REFORMS



- Limited consideration of criminal record by occupational licensing agencies and created a new “certificate of employability” for individuals leaving prison. [SB138](#).
- Recognized a state-wide system of “accountability courts” expanding eligibility for diversion to veterans and others whose crimes involved mental illness and substance abuse. [SB200](#).
- Extended dispossession of firearms to any felony conviction and recognized administrative relief as an affirmative defense to prosecution for unlawful possession. [SB119](#).
- Established a statewide Reentry Task Force composed of legislative and executive officials to study progress in reducing recidivism. [SJR 80](#).
- Approved a bill to facilitate the expungement process.

VIRGINIA ENACTED SEVEN NEW LAWS TO MITIGATE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

- Established enforceable limits on how occupational licensing boards consider criminal record, repealing a provision that allowed boards to deny licensure based on a conclusion that a person’s record made them “unfit” or “unsuited” to practice the profession, and establishing due process safeguards. [SB826](#).
- Expanded vacatur eligibility for survivors of human trafficking, [HB2393](#).
- Eased some employment restrictions for those convicted of “barrier crimes.” [SB1466](#).
- Took additional steps to prepare for the “clean slate” record clearing that will become effective in mid-2026. [SB1466](#).
- Launched (once again) the two-year process of amending its constitution to limit loss of civil rights to those actually incarcerated, hoping to complete the process in 2026. [HJ2](#).
- Enacted two bills facilitating expungement.



2025 Honorable Mentions

Another six states earned an **Honorable Mention** for their enactment of at least one significant new record reform



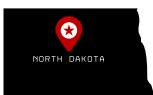
ILLINOIS

made sealing of criminal records under its existing broad statute automatic by 2029. [HB1836](#). The bill was signed into law by the Governor on January 16, 2026. Illinois also enacted a separate bill providing for automatic sealing of prostitution convictions. [HB4410](#).



MARYLAND

expanded eligibility for expungement, and in the process remedied a flaw in the law that excluded anyone who had ever violated their probation. [SB432](#). Maryland's governor issued blanket pardons to thousands convicted of marijuana possession and vetoed a bill that would have established a predetermination process for occupational licensing because it exempted too many licensing boards. [HB482](#).



NORTH DAKOTA

for the first time, provided for expungement of non-convictions at disposition and also provided for expungement for pardoned convictions. [HB1166](#). North Dakota also authorized prosecution-led diversion programs, and "deflection" programs to avoid incarceration for individuals with "a behavioral health condition." [HB1425](#).



OREGON

authorized the establishment of a statewide system of "treatment courts," including a drug court, a veterans' treatment court, a juvenile treatment court, a treatment court for driving while under the influence, a mental health court, a family treatment court or any other similar court...." [SB2632](#). Upon fulfillment of the terms and conditions of the probation agreement, "the court shall discharge the person and dismiss the proceedings against the person without adjudication of guilt" and this disposition "is not a conviction for any collateral consequence." Oregon also expanded eligibility for juvenile expungement and facilitated procedures. [HB2677](#).



WASHINGTON

strengthened its fair chance employment law to move criminal record inquiry until after a conditional offer of employment has been made and created categories of records that employers may not consider (non-conviction and juvenile records). [HB1747](#). This law provides procedural protections to correct or explain the record and requires adverse decisions to be explained in writing to include the employer's assessment under the "legitimate business reason" definition. Washington also expanded juvenile diversion, [HB1391](#), promulgated standards for pardon and streamlined the pardon process. [HB1131](#).



CONGRESS

enrolled a statute authorizing vacatur and expungement for any non-violent offense committed by a victim of human trafficking.

The low mark for the most regressive legislation in 2025 goes to **TENNESSEE**, which enacted what is certainly the most confusing and restrictive regime of civil rights restoration in the Nation, imposing new substantive and procedural limits on the judicial process for regaining rights, including the right to vote. See [HB445](#).

