

Commentary

New York needs a clean slate law. This is why

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Clean Slate legislation can provide a fresh start for thousands of New Yorkers by removing barriers for those who have served their sentences and provide them the opportunity to thrive. This is more important than ever in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that New Yorkers with criminal records aren't left behind as the economy reopens. In the era of worker shortages and "the Great Resignation," the Clean Slate Act can combat workforce shortages by reducing obstacles people face as they seek employment after incarceration.

Under the Clean Slate Act, New Yorkers will be eligible to have conviction records automatically sealed 3 years from sentencing for misdemeanors and 7 years from sentencing for felonies, not including time incarcerated. These timeframes are carefully calibrated to allow people with conviction records to move forward with their lives and access jobs, housing, and higher education. To be eligible for automatic sealing relief, individuals must have completed probation, parole or post-release supervision, and cannot have incurred any new convictions or pending charges during the three or seven year waiting period. Sex offenses are not eligible for sealing.

By automating the sealing of criminal records, after a period of time, thousands of people who are now excluded from the workforce would be able to get jobs.

Verizon is one of the state's largest private unionized employers and is engaged in this issue because we think people deserve second chances. This issue impacts millions of New Yorkers, including our customers, our employees and our business. We believe that if someone hasn't had any convictions for a certain number of years and aren't on parole, probation or the state registry, they should be able to finally move on with their life.

This reform proposal will create a next generation economy that truly provides opportunities for everyone. We look forward to working with lawmakers and the Governor to take that next step to help people rejoin the workforce. It is the right thing for those people in need of a second chance.

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