



## REPAIRING REPUTATION AND RESTORING RIGHTS

### For Individuals Who Want To Improve Reputation and Status

Having been incarcerated can certainly come with a stigma. We can pretend it's not there, but we know it is. Employers, neighbors, even family members can look down their noses at people previously arrested and incarcerated. Be that as it may, it is also a new day in America. Mass incarceration and mass arrests have affected so many citizens today that the former stigma associated with incarceration is simply not as powerful as it used to be. Just about everyone in the U.S. has now experienced having a loved one or family member who has been incarcerated, so the stigma is not what it once was.

In fact, one major campaign, 'Ban the Box', has been successful in 18 states and is gaining momentum. 'Ban the Box' asks employers to remove the check box from job applications asking if applicants have ever been incarcerated. Even President Obama directed federal agencies to "ban the box" on federal job applications.

Coming home, being gainfully employed, and never returning to prison are certainly ideal ways to rebuild your life and reputation. This guide will walk you through some other options that may be available to you. You may have more opportunities than you realize!

**Record Sealing** Record sealing is the process of removing from general review all records associated with a court case. However, the records do not typically completely vanish and may still be reviewed under restricted circumstances; in most instances, it requires a court order to unseal records once they are sealed. Many states do order records to be destroyed after they are sealed. Once a record is sealed, in some states, the contents are legally considered never to have occurred and are not acknowledged by the state.

Laws pertaining to sealing a record vary greatly from state to state. If you are interested in pursuing the act of sealing your record, you don't necessarily need an attorney. However, like most legal proceedings, it is advised. In some cases legal professionals such as paralegals will offer their assistance with this at a discounted rate from that of an attorney. You must verify that you are eligible for record sealing before beginning the process. Requirements vary from state to state.

**“Based on reports of recruiters and HR professionals surveyed, the United States appears to have the greatest number of companies with corporate policies requiring online reputational checks.”**

[http://www.job-hunt.org/guides/DPD\\_Online-Reputation-Research\\_overview.pdf](http://www.job-hunt.org/guides/DPD_Online-Reputation-Research_overview.pdf)

**Expungement** Having your record expunged is typically more effective than just having it sealed. Once a record has been expunged, it essentially can be stated that the expunged incident did not occur. There are some limitations to this rule depending on which state you reside in. In some states, you must seal a record (see above) before you are eligible for expungement. Just as with record sealing, you may want to employ the services of an attorney or legal professional to help you apply.

**Mugshot Sites** A new and somewhat unfortunate trend is the rise of mugshot websites. These sites typically take all public arrest information programmatically from official online record sources, including booking photos, charges, addresses, and other information associated with an arrest and make it public for people to find said record on a search engine. Additionally, these sites are very good at search engine optimization. This means when people search your name

and you have past arrests, these sites tend to rank very well in the results. For a hefty fee, the website will usually offer to remove your posting, usually between \$40 and \$400. However, it doesn't prevent another website from doing the exact same thing. This can make it incredibly difficult for anyone with even an arrest (regardless of the outcome in court) to ever move past the incident. Paying for the removal of your information is an option you may elect to use. Reports are often mixed with doing this. It is also worth noting that this practice is currently under litigation in multiple courts and may possibly be ended by future rulings.

**Federal Pardons** The President of the United States can grant pardons for all federal offenses, excluding impeachment. Generally speaking, applications for pardons are referred for review and non-binding recommendation by the Office of the Pardon Attorney, an official of the United States Department of Justice.

The application for a presidential pardon can be downloaded at the following URL:  
[www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pardon/legacy/2007/06/12/commutation\\_form.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/pardon/legacy/2007/06/12/commutation_form.pdf)

Applications also be requested by mail:

Office of the Pardon Attorney  
145 N Street N.E.  
Room 5E.508  
Washington, DC 20530

*Additional Resource! If you need letter-writing tips, our [Writing a Professional Letter Self-help Guide](#) is a great resource.*

Get your  
FREE COPY

**SEND A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE TO\*:**

WriteAPrisoner.com  
Writing a Professional Letter Self-help  
P.O. Box 10  
Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

\* Prison staff or pen-pals can also print this guide at  
<http://www.writeaprisoner.com/self-help>

**State Pardons/Clemency** While the President presides over pardons for federal offenses, the individual governors in each state ultimately preside over state offenses. Some states have a board of pardons, while others are overseen by the parole board, and some directly by the Governor's office. For information on obtaining an application for a state pardon, you would need to write your respective governor's office and ask for one. Don't plead your case in your initial letter. Simply state that you would like an application, and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope if possible. The individual options for each state should be listed in the application sent to you. The address for each state is as follows:

**Alabama**

The Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles  
PO Box 302405  
Montgomery, AL 36130-2405

**Alaska**

Parole Board  
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1800  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3570

**Arizona**

Arizona Board of Executive Clemency  
1645 West Jefferson, Suite 101  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

**Arkansas**

Arkansas Parole Board  
Two Union National Plaza Bldg.  
105 W. Capitol Avenue, Suite 500  
Little Rock, AR 72201

**California**

Governor's Office  
State Capitol  
Attention: Legal Affairs  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Colorado**

State of Colorado  
Executive Chambers  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, CO 80203-1792

**Connecticut**

Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles  
55 West Main Street  
Waterbury, CT 06702

**Delaware**

Kent County Courthouse  
Courtroom 1 (unless otherwise notified)  
414 Federal Street  
Dover, DE 19901

**Florida**

The Office of Executive Clemency  
Florida Commission on Offender Review  
4070 Esplanade Way  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2450

**Georgia**

State Board of Pardons and Paroles  
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive SE  
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower  
Atlanta, GA 30334-4909

**Hawaii**

The Governor of Hawaii  
State Capitol, 5th Floor  
Honolulu, HI 96813

**Idaho**

Commission of Pardons and Parole  
P.O. Box 83720  
Statehouse Mail  
Boise, ID 83720-1807

**Illinois**

Illinois Prisoner Review Board  
319 East Madison Street, Suite A  
Springfield, IL 62701

**Indiana**

Indiana Government Center – South  
Room E321  
302 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2278

**Iowa**

Iowa Board of Parole  
510 E 12th Street Suite 3  
Des Moines, IA 50319

**Kansas**

Kansas Department of Corrections  
ATTN: Prisoner Review Board  
714 SW Jackson, Suite 300  
Topeka, KS 66603

**Kentucky**

Office of the Governor  
700 Capitol Avenue  
Frankfort, KY 4060

**Louisiana**

Louisiana Board of Pardons and Parole  
P.O. Box 94304  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

**Maine**

State of Maine Governor's Board on Executive Clemency  
111 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Maryland**

Maryland Parole Commission  
6776 Reisterstown Road  
Baltimore, MD 21215-2314

**Massachusetts**

Executive Clemency Coordinator  
Executive Clemency Unit  
12 Mercer Road  
Natick, MA 01760

**Michigan**

Office of the Parole Board  
Pardons and Commutations Coordinator  
Post Office Box 30003  
Lansing, MI 48909

**Minnesota**

Board of Pardons  
1450 Energy Park Drive  
Suite 200  
St. Paul, MN 55108

**Mississippi**

State of Mississippi Parole Board  
660 North Street  
Suite 100A  
Jackson, MS 39202

**Missouri**

Department of Corrections  
Missouri Board of Probation and Parole  
P.O. Box 236  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

**Montana**

State of Montana  
Board of Parson and Parole  
1002 Hollenbeck Road  
Deer Lodge, MT 59722

**Nebraska**

Board of Pardons  
P.O. Box 94754  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4754

**Nevada**

Nevada Board of Pardons Commissioners  
1677 Old Hot Springs Road, Suite A  
Carson City, NV 89706

**New Hampshire**

Department of Justice  
33 Capitol Street  
Concord, NH 03301

**New Jersey**

New Jersey State Parole Board  
Attn: Clemency Unit  
P.O. Box 862  
Trenton, NJ 08625

**New Mexico**

Office of the Governor  
Attn: Pardons  
State Capitol Building, Suite 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

**New York**

New York State Department of Corrections and Community  
Supervision  
Executive Clemency Bureau  
The Harriman State Campus – Building 2  
1220 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12226-2050

**North Carolina**

Governor's Clemency Office  
4294 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4294

**North Dakota**

Clerk, Pardon Advisory Board  
Division of Adult Services  
P.O. Box 1898  
Bismarck, ND 58502-1898

**Ohio**

Ohio Parole Board  
770 West Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43222

**Oklahoma**

Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board  
P.O. Box 53448  
Oklahoma City, OK 73152

**Oregon**

Governor of Oregon  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301-4047

**Pennsylvania**

Board of Pardons  
333 Market Street  
15th Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

**Rhode Island**

Office of the Governor  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**South Carolina**

Division of Legal Services  
Attn: Pardon Application Processing  
2221 Devine Street, Suite 600  
P.O. Box 50666  
Columbia, SC 29250

**South Dakota**

South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles  
P.O. Box 5911  
Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5911

**Tennessee**

Board of Parole  
Division of Board Operations  
404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 1300  
Nashville, TN 37243-0850

**Texas**

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles  
Clemency Section  
8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard  
Austin, TX 78757

**Utah**

Utah Board of Pardons and Parole  
Attn: Pardon Specialist  
448 East Winchester Street  
Suite 300  
Murray, UT 84107

**Vermont**

Vermont Crime Information Center  
Pardons  
45 State Drive  
Waterbury, VT 05671-1300

**Virginia**

Pardons Staff  
Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth  
P.O. Box 2454  
Richmond, VA 23218-2454

**Washington**

Washington State Clemency and Pardons Board  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 40116  
Olympia, WA 98504

**West Virginia**

Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard E.  
Charleston, WV 25305

**Wisconsin**

Office of Governor Scott Walker  
115 East Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

**Wyoming**

Wyoming Board of Parole  
3120 Old Faithful Road, Suite 300  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

**AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT PARDONS:** Pardons being granted are extremely rare. Your prison record typically needs to be an exemplary one. If there are any pending fines associated with your incarceration, they will typically need to be paid in full prior to submitting your application. Letters from prison officials, former presiding judges (serving or retired), educators, pillars of the community, etc. may all be welcome additions when applying. What you have done with your time in prison will have a huge impact. Inmates who pursued educations in prison are going to see better results than inmates who got into trouble during their incarceration.

**Online Reputation** Today just about everything is available online. This is especially true in the case of criminal charges. Negative online reputations can frustrate job opportunities and hurt future endeavors. Here are some steps that we recommend after release:

- Reviewing articles about your crime and reading comments from people who don't know you and don't know your case can be frustrating, but the best approach is to ignore them. If you start replying to online comments, you may only reignite interest in older negative articles about you.
- Get a LinkedIn.com account. Fill it out completely. These accounts not only rank high in search results when someone searches for your name, they are specifically designed to network with professionals and gain employment.
- Volunteer at community events. This is a great way to give back to the community and an opportunity to earn and build a good reputation. Volunteers are often covered in news stories. If you want to get recognized for the good you're doing, simply start doing good.
- There are many paid services online that will actively work to repair your online reputation. These are typically very costly. However, this may be an option you wish to pursue. A search will return many options if you're interested in a paid service.
- If you want to take a less public approach to asking that negative content about you be removed, consider writing the author of the content. Just remember that news websites are typically very unlikely to remove a story unless there was an error. This suggestion applies more to comments made on forums, Facebook, etc.



*Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.*

- Abraham Lincoln



However, if a news article incorrectly states information about your case, you may have luck in getting them to correct that information. Just be prepared to provide evidence for any claims of posted misinformation.

- You can also consider the creation of other social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter once released. These can help push down negative results on search engines. Conduct yourself in a respectful way. Avoid posting photos that are not in good taste. Avoid using profanity online. Never

engage in online arguments or negative commenting. Everyone has a past, but not everyone behaves like they have a future. You do. Embrace it!

Success story or suggestion? We want to know what worked for you so we can share it with other inmates.

If you have a suggestion to make about this resource, please do so at:

Self-help Suggestion - P.O. Box 10 - Edgewater, FL 32132 USA

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