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## **California Proposal Extends “Ban the Box” Policy to All Cities and Counties**

### **Assemblymember Dickinson Bill Reduces Recidivism and Builds on National Movement to Reduce Employment Barriers to People with Criminal Records**

Oakland, CA – California’s “ban the box” policy for state public employees could be expanded to city and county workers across the state under a new bill introduced this week by Assemblymember Roger Dickinson (D-9). The groundbreaking bill, [AB 1831](#), removes the criminal background check requirement from the initial application process for local employees, which would reduce unnecessary barriers to employment for the one in four adult Californians who have an arrest or conviction record. This bill is modeled on the “ban the box” hiring process for state public employees adopted in 2010. If passed, California would join five states and over 30 cities and counties across the U.S. that have adopted similar legislation.

“I am proud to author this timely legislation, together with Assemblymember Swanson,” said Assemblymember Dickinson. “California should join the bi-partisan movement across the nation that’s opening doors, not shutting them, for qualified workers who have turned their lives around. It’s a simple, yet effective, approach to hiring which also protects safety and security on the job,” said Assemblymember Dickinson.

In California and around the country, qualified job applicants are often plagued by old or minor records and discouraged from applying because a “box” on job applications requires criminal history information that often leads employers to dismiss applicants at the outset. Job denials resulting from criminal background checks hit people of color especially hard, which is why the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requires employers to establish a strong nexus between an individual’s criminal history and the specific responsibilities of a given job.

“We have to create a more level playing field for hard-working, qualified people to compete fairly for employment,” said Maurice Emsellem, Policy Co-Director of the National Employment Law Project based in Oakland. “It’s the right thing to do to set an example for the private sector and promote public safety, especially now when thousands of non-violent offenders are seeking employment and a second chance as a result of California’s realignment.”

“Realignment” (AB 109, enacted 2011) of California’s criminal justice system seeks to produce budgetary savings by reducing recidivism and promoting rehabilitation. Employment of eligible people with a conviction history is key to the success of realignment at the local level, as studies have shown that stable employment significantly lowers recidivism and promotes public safety. AB 1831 will align city and county hiring practices with the current policy of California’s State Personnel Board. The bill exempts positions for which the agency is required by law to conduct a criminal background check.

Five states and over 30 U.S. cities and counties have responded to the recidivism challenge by removing the conviction history question from public sector job applications and delaying a criminal background check until the later stages of the hiring process. Most recently, Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg adopted this policy for all public employment in New York City. California became the sixth state to do so when the State Personnel Board removed the question from job applications for state positions in 2010.

The National Employment Law Project has worked with policymakers and advocates promoting similar reforms and is sponsoring the legislation introduced by Assemblymember Dickinson.

*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](http://www.nelp.org).*

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