



Helping Ex-offenders

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I recently had the opportunity [to testify on behalf of SB900](#), a bill that would remove some barriers to hiring ex-offenders. As with the Ban the Box initiative—[which may not actually be helping people](#)—this is an effort to make sure that those who have been convicted of felonies are given a real opportunity to become productive, tax-paying citizens. Unlike the case with Ban the Box, the barrier is the government itself.

Under current law, the Missouri Lottery Commission is prohibited from licensing anyone who has been convicted of any felony from selling lottery tickets. This means that these men and women—regardless of the type or severity of their crimes—are effectively barred from working at many convenience stores and gas stations. If this bill is adopted, employers have more flexibility in hiring. While they are not required to hire convicted felons, they are not barred from doing so either.

Research shows that ex-offenders who are unable to find employment are more likely to re-offend. A [2014 study](#) by the Indiana Department of Corrections concluded that the ability of an offender to find work after prison was “significantly and statistically correlated with recidivism, regardless of the offender’s classification.” A [2016 study](#) conducted by the Center for Economic

and Policy Research concluded that:

In 2014, overall employment rates were 0.9 to 1.0 percentage points lower as a result of the employment penalty faced by the large population of former prisoners and people with felony convictions. For men, their employment rate was 1.6 to 1.8 percentage points lower.

These barriers to employment are significant. A survey of The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction database, a project of The Council of State Governments' Justice Center, shows [221 mandatory barriers to employment in Missouri due to a criminal conviction](#). While some of these make sense, others do not.

Common-sense reforms can remove unnecessary legal barriers to ex-offenders becoming productive members of our communities. What's more, they amount to the government cleaning its own house rather than trying to pass the buck on to businesses.

Tags:

- [Criminal Justice Reform](#)

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[3] <https://showmeinstitute.org/publication/employment-jobs/senate-bill-900-and-barriers-employment-ex-offenders>

[4] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/employment-jobs/does-banning-box-work>

[5] <http://www.sascv.org/ijcjs/pdfs/nallyetalijcjs2014vol9issue1.pdf>

[6] <http://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/employment-prisoners-felonies-2016-06.pdf>

[7] <https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/search/?jurisdiction=28>

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