



**STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN**  
*Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.®*

## **Support Expungement in Criminal Matters**

The criminal justice system aims to prepare ex-offenders to re-enter society and successfully move forward with their lives upon release from prison, probation, or parole. All too often, however, ex-offenders encounter substantial barriers in attempting to do so, long after paying the price for their past. One of the most significant ways to remove or reduce these barriers is to allow for the expungement of criminal records.

Recognizing this, the State Bar of Wisconsin supports legislative efforts to expand the ability of certain persons to expunge court records.

Over the years, studies have shown time and again even minimal contact with the criminal justice system can have a significant detrimental impact on various aspects of a person's life. The collateral consequences of a criminal record can be a life-long barrier to success, presenting obstacles to employment, housing, education, family reunification and often resulting in significant debt.

Expungement is an issue that has been before the Legislature and the Supreme Court during the last several years, yet, despite extensive study and discussion, there have been few changes made. Now is the time to reverse that trend, as well as improve the lives of those who continue to struggle long after paying their debt to society and are ready to move forward in our communities. Without expungement, every sentence is a life sentence.

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