



## R Sheet On The Clean Slate Act of 2025

### Background

The Clean Slate Act of 2025 ([H.R.3114/S.1580](#)) is a federal legislative proposal designed to modernize the management of certain federal criminal records through both automatic and petition-based sealing mechanisms. It targets individuals with [eligible federal offenses](#)—primarily nonviolent crimes and specific marijuana-related convictions—who have completed all terms of their sentence, including imprisonment, probation, and supervised release. Individuals convicted of violent crimes, sex offenses, terrorism, or other serious offenses are ineligible. For those who qualify, records may be [sealed automatically](#) after a designated waiting period or, in broader cases, through a formal petition process. Sealed records [remain accessible](#) to law enforcement and courts for specific investigative, security, or employment purposes, such as for positions involving national security or law enforcement. The Act also includes [employer liability protections](#) and encourages the use of technology to streamline the sealing process. Unlike state-level clean slate policies, which can affect millions with state convictions, this federal initiative is limited to those with federal records. Its primary aim is to [facilitate successful reentry](#) for eligible individuals by reducing barriers to employment and housing while maintaining safeguards for public safety and sensitive positions. Part of a broader trend toward modernizing criminal justice practices through system improvements and technological innovation, the Act reflects a targeted approach to [federal-level record sealing](#).

### Summary

The [Clean Slate Act of 2025](#) proposes to modernize federal criminal record management by introducing automatic and petition-based sealing for eligible nonviolent offenses to reduce barriers to employment and housing for individuals who have fulfilled all terms of their sentences.

Supporters argue that these [system improvements](#)—especially automation—expand economic opportunity, support law enforcement in focusing on high-priority threats, and lower recidivism rates, while critics raise concerns about the policy’s limited scope and potential impacts on public safety and transparency.

Lawmakers should advance [targeted, automated record sealing](#) for eligible federal offenses, an approach that promotes public safety, economic growth, and limited, effective government while maintaining law enforcement access for sensitive positions and investigations.

### Current Debate

The Clean Slate Act of 2025 has prompted robust discussion among policymakers, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and the public. [Supporters argue](#) that automating the sealing of eligible records is a practical modernization that supports public safety, economic opportunity, and community stability. [Research has shown](#) that individuals whose records are sealed or expunged experience notably lower recidivism rates. For example, a [comprehensive study](#) found a five-year recidivism rate of just [4.2 percent](#) among those whose records were expunged (most for nonviolent misdemeanors). Automated record sealing is seen as a critical innovation, as [fewer than 10 percent](#) of eligible adults currently succeed in petition-based processes due to cost and complexity.

[Proponents emphasize](#) that by reducing administrative and social barriers for individuals who have demonstrated rehabilitation, the Act can lower the likelihood of reoffending,

### Summary

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- Supporters argue that these [system improvements](#)—especially automation—expand economic opportunity, support law enforcement in focusing on high-priority threats, and lower recidivism rates, while critics raise concerns about the policy’s limited scope and potential impacts on public safety and transparency.
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strengthen public safety, and allow law enforcement to focus on higher-priority threats. They also highlight the economic benefits: [More than 40,000](#) legal and regulatory restrictions limit opportunities for people with criminal records, and [94 percent](#) of employers use background checks, making it harder for individuals to [secure housing](#) and employment. Clean slate policies are viewed as a way to [remove unnecessary obstacles](#), allowing individuals to contribute productively to society and supporting broader community well-being.

Critics of the Act raise concerns about [potential risks to public safety](#), suggesting that sealing records could hinder background checks and limit access to relevant information for employers and the public while citing [mixed results](#) regarding employment benefits. Others argue that its scope is too narrow, as it [applies only to federal offenses](#). There are also ongoing discussions about the [technical and administrative challenges](#) of implementing automated sealing and ensuring accuracy in record management.

Stakeholders are divided, some prioritizing public safety and transparency while others emphasize rehabilitation, economic reintegration, and the reduction of government-imposed barriers. The debate reflects broader tensions in criminal justice policy between traditional “tough-on-crime” approaches and efforts to [modernize reentry](#) and [reduce collateral consequences](#) for individuals with criminal records through system improvements and technological innovation.

## Action Items

- **Modernize Federal Record Sealing Through Automation**  
Policymakers should enact the Clean Slate Act of 2025 to update federal criminal record management for eligible nonviolent offenses. [Automated sealing](#) for certain nonviolent and marijuana-related federal offenses, combined with a petition process for other eligible cases, will improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, and prioritize limited law enforcement resources. Automating record sealing addresses the current underutilization of petition-based processes.
- **Strengthen Public Safety and Community Stability**  
[Evidence demonstrates](#) that individuals whose records are sealed and who remain law-abiding for several years pose no greater public safety risk than those with no criminal record. States with clean slate or automated sealing laws, such as [Michigan and Minnesota](#), have achieved three-year recidivism rates well below the national average, showing the effectiveness of these changes in reducing reoffending and enhancing public safety. By removing barriers to employment and housing, the Act addresses [causes of recidivism](#) (e.g., unemployment, instability) and supports law enforcement’s broader mission of [community trust and fairness](#).
- **Support Economic Opportunity and Free Markets**  
The Act’s [employer immunity provisions](#) encourage businesses to hire qualified individuals without fear of liability, thereby expanding the labor pool and increasing productivity. By letting the market—not government-imposed stigma—determine opportunity, it advances economic dynamism and individual self-sufficiency. Reducing barriers to employment and housing for those with eligible federal records will also [decrease reliance on public assistance](#) and [stimulate local economies](#).
- **Promote Limited, Effective Government Through Technology**  
[Automating the sealing process](#) for eligible records reduces administrative costs and judicial burdens, allowing government resources to be redirected toward serious public safety concerns. The Act’s technology-driven approach and clear eligibility criteria promote limited, effective government while protecting individual privacy and dignity. [Partnerships](#) with organizations experienced in [digital systems](#) will ensure the process is efficient and accessible.



Clean slate policies are viewed as a way to remove unnecessary obstacles, allowing individuals to contribute productively to society and supporting broader community well-being.

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