

# ICYMI: Governor Murphy, Attorney General Platkin, and New Jersey State Police Announce a Nearly 70% Reduction in Expungement Backlog

04/15/2024

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy, Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), and the Division of Criminal Justice today announced a 117% increase in processed final expungement orders from 2022 to 2023 and a nearly 70% reduction in the number of pending applications from its peak. Through the State’s significant efforts, the number of expungement orders awaiting final processing is at its lowest point since legislation took effect that significantly increased the pool of people eligible to expunge their criminal records. NJSP is actively working to clear remaining expungement orders eligible for final processing. Continued efforts are underway to better integrate law enforcement systems with systems utilized by the courts to allow for further streamlining of the process in the future.

In 2019, Governor Murphy signed major criminal justice reform legislation as part of his Second Chance Agenda. The legislation created a petition process for those convicted of some low-level offenses to have their criminal records expunged or erased, providing them with a “clean slate.” This process is available to individuals who have not committed an offense in the past 10 years and have not been convicted of serious crimes. The law also mandates the sealing of low-level marijuana cases upon their disposition.

In response to this law, the NJSP established the Expungement Unit. The Unit is responsible for protecting individuals’ right to privacy by sealing and expunging all criminal records ordered by the court. The number of final expungement orders received jumped significantly after the “clean slate” law took effect – from a total of 36,120 between 2018 and 2020 to 144,071 between 2021 and 2023. The number of final orders processed completely totaled nearly 110,000 in 2023 and the first three months of 2024 combined.

“Our Administration believes in second chances and we’re proud to have processed over 100,000 expungements orders to date,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Expunging criminal records will help expand opportunities for individuals who have successfully rehabilitated their lives and allow them to make further contributions to society. Our Administration remains committed to this work, including clearing the remaining backlog, and will continue to advance the cause of criminal justice reform and reintegration in New Jersey.”

“New Jersey is dedicated to aiding and supporting individuals who have made mistakes that have created obstacles to employment opportunities and housing. True reform includes helping to remove the stigma associated with an arrest or conviction that often stands in the way of success,” **said Attorney General Platkin**. “We are committed to continuing to improve the expungement system in order to help individuals to overcome their past, as we help pave the way for a brighter future for countless individuals.”

“The expedited clearance of these backlogged records reflects the New Jersey State Police’s commitment to fostering greater trust in the criminal justice system,” **said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police**. “With the steadfast support of Governor Murphy and Attorney General Platkin, the New Jersey State Police remain committed to continually improving upon the efficacy of the expungement process.”

“Each processed expungement order reflects an important step in an individual’s efforts to improve their life after moving through the criminal justice system,” **said Director of Criminal Justice J. Stephen Ferketic**. “This administration is committed to doing all that we can to improve efficiencies around the processing of these critically important orders.”

After the passage of the “clean slate” law, funding was specifically allocated for enhancing and sustaining the NJSP’s Expungement Unit to bolster its capabilities. These funds have facilitated the recruitment of additional personnel, procurement of necessary equipment, and investment in hardware and software solutions crucial for

effective operations.

To adjust to this increased workload and ensure that expungements were performed as timely as possible, the NJSP Software Programming Unit implemented a program targeted at Expedited Expungement Orders in early 2024.

This program reduced the number of pending expungements by over 45,000. Additional staffing, enhancements, and modifications to expungement programming, as well as enhanced communication between the NJSP and municipal and county law enforcement partners and other relevant stakeholders, have helped streamline the expungement process and resolve cases more efficiently.

As of the end of March 2024, the Expungement Unit has processed 58,198 final orders since it was established. There were 19,874 applications, including recently received requests, pending as of the end of March. NJSP intends to continue working with other stakeholders within the criminal justice system to further reduce this backlog.

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## Governor Phil Murphy

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