

Lopinto (HB 55)**Act No. 145**

Existing law provides for the expungement of records of arrest and misdemeanor convictions in certain circumstances.

Existing law provides for the confidentiality of expunged records and authorizes access to those records by law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, and statutorily defined entities.

New law provides for a comprehensive revision to existing law provisions, including the following major changes:

- (1) Moves expungement provisions of law from provisions regarding public records to the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- (2) Provides for statutorily mandated forms to be used in motions for expungement and judgments of expungement.
- (3) Prohibits the unauthorized dissemination of expunged records by third parties and provides civil penalties for the unauthorized dissemination of expunged record information.
- (4) Provides for a five-year cleansing period without a conviction of a felony to obtain an expungement for a misdemeanor conviction.
- (5) Provides for a 10-year cleansing period without conviction to obtain an expungement for a felony conviction.
- (6) Deletes provisions of existing law authorizing the destruction of criminal records.
- (7) Provides for a limitation on the number of expungements a person may obtain.
- (8) Provides eligibility criteria to obtain an expungement.
- (9) Prohibits the expungement of crimes of violence, sex offenses, and most controlled dangerous substances violations.
- (10) Allows the expungement of a conviction for possession of a controlled dangerous substance or the possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance.
- (11) Authorizes the district attorney or the La. Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information to request a contradictory hearing on a motion to expunge and provides for time periods for raising objections.
- (12) Provides for an expungement by redaction of certain identifying information in the records of a person who is arrested or convicted with other offenders who are not entitled to an expungement. Provides that expungement by redaction is the removal of the name or any other identifying information of the person entitled to the expungement but otherwise retains the records of the incident as they relate to the other defendants.
- (13) Provides for an interim expungement of a felony arrest when that original arrest results in a conviction for a misdemeanor. Provides that these expungements are not subject to the cleansing period and are unlimited. Prohibits the expungement of misdemeanor convictions arising from the felony arrest.
- (14) Authorizes the use of expunged records by law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, prosecutors and judges for the purposes of defending a law enforcement, criminal justice agency, or prosecutor in a civil suit for damages resulting from wrongful arrest or other civil litigation and the expunged record is necessary to provide a proper defense.

Existing law provides for the following fees for expungement:

- (1) The La. Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information may charge \$250.
- (2) The sheriff may charge \$50.
- (3) The district attorney may charge \$50.

New law retains existing law and makes the fees nonrefundable.

New law authorizes the clerk of court to charge an administrative fee of up to \$200.

Existing law provides that an applicant for expungement does not have to pay any fees for an expungement if a certification obtained from the district attorney is presented to the clerk of court which verifies that the applicant has no felony convictions and no pending felony charges under a bill of information or indictment and at least one of the following applies:

- (1) The applicant was acquitted, after trial, of all charges derived from the arrest, including any lesser and included offense.
- (2) The district attorney consents, and the case against the applicant was dismissed or the district attorney declined to prosecute the case prior to the time limitations provided for in existing law, and the applicant did not participate in a pretrial diversion program.
- (3) The applicant was arrested and was never prosecuted within the time limitations provided for in existing law and did not participate in a pretrial diversion program.

New law retains existing law and adds an additional circumstance for the exemption of expungement fees when the applicant has been determined to be factually innocent and entitled to compensation for a wrongful conviction pursuant to existing law.

Effective August 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 44:4.1(B)(38); Adds C.Cr.P. Arts. 971-995; Repeals R.S. 44:9)