

Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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For More Information:
State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford
773 379-4663

Ford Salutes President Obama's Bid to "Ban the Box" in America

CHICAGO – In a major policy speech yesterday in Newark, New Jersey, highlighting the reentry process of formerly-incarcerated individuals, President Obama called for “banning the box” for applicants for most federal positions. This move was saluted and praised by state Representative La Shawn K. Ford, D- Chicago, who first introduced legislation in Illinois in 2007 to “ban the box” on state of Illinois employment applications. In 2013, with the urging of Ford, then-Governor Quinn signed an administrative order directing state of Illinois agencies to “ban the box”, putting into effect the intent of Ford’s legislation. “Ban the box” refers to removing the question on employment applications which asks if the applicant has ever been convicted of a felony.

“Many people are shut out of job opportunities when they must reveal on a job application that they have been convicted of a felony,” said Ford. “Many of these job applications are discarded before the person even has a chance to show their skills and abilities or even explain what happened when they were convicted. This idea was the first idea that I ran on when I was running for the General Assembly in 2006 before I was elected, and many organizations joined the effort to “ban the box” when I first introduced the legislation in 2007 as one of my first pieces of legislation,” said Ford. “The legislation in 2007 was passed by both the House and the Senate, but was vetoed by the governor, but the need to reduce barriers to employment for returning citizens persisted, so I continued to introduce the legislation in each of the following General Assemblies. Two years ago, I worked with and strongly urged then-Governor Quinn and his staff to bring this policy change to Illinois, and it happened. Now, President Obama has placed “ban the box” in his program for criminal justice reform, and we should praise and thank the President for his actions. This is a time for greater opportunities, and I hope that this action will lead the way so more returning citizens will be encouraged to apply for federal jobs without fear so they can compete for employment to support their families,” said Ford.

According to the White House, the President has called on Congress to follow a growing number of states, cities, and private companies that have decided to “ban the box” on job applications. Congress is considering bipartisan legislation that would “ban the box” for federal hiring and hiring by federal contractors. In the meantime, the President is directing the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to take action where it can by modifying its rules to delay inquiries into criminal history until later in the hiring process. While most agencies already have taken this step, this action will better ensure that applicants from all segments of society, including those with prior criminal histories, receive a fair opportunity to compete for federal employment.

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit www.lashawnford.com.

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