

STATE OF NEW YORK

8161

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

June 4, 2019

Introduced by M. of A. LENTOL -- read once and referred to the Committee on Codes

AN ACT to amend the criminal procedure law, in relation to eligibility for conviction sealing for certain applicants

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Section 160.59 of the criminal procedure law, as added by section 48 of part WWW of chapter 59 of the laws of 2017 and paragraph (a) of subdivision 2 and subdivision 11 as amended by chapter 60 of the laws of 2017, is amended to read as follows:

§ 160.59 Sealing of certain convictions.

1. Definitions: As used in this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Eligible offense" shall mean a violation of subdivision one of section eleven hundred ninety-two of the vehicle and traffic law or a violation of subdivision two of section 240.37 of the penal law or any crime defined in the laws of this state other than a sex offense defined in article one hundred thirty of the penal law, an offense defined in article two hundred sixty-three of the penal law, a felony offense defined in article one hundred twenty-five of the penal law, a violent felony offense defined in section 70.02 of the penal law, a class A felony offense defined in the penal law, a felony offense defined in article one hundred five of the penal law where the underlying offense is not an eligible offense, an attempt to commit an offense that is not an eligible offense if the attempt is a felony, or an offense for which registration as a sex offender is required pursuant to article six-C of the correction law. For the purposes of this section, where the [defendant] applicant is convicted of more than one eligible offense, ~~[committed as part of the same criminal transaction as defined in subdivision two of section 40.10 of this chapter, those offenses shall be considered one eligible offense]~~ for which they were charged in separate

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 counts of one indictment, information or complaint, or for which they
2 were charged in two or more indictments, informations or complaints,
3 filed in the same court prior to entry of judgment under any of them,
4 those offenses shall be considered one eligible offense.

5 (b) "Sentencing judge" shall mean the judge who pronounced sentence
6 upon the conviction under consideration, or if that judge is no longer
7 sitting in a court in the jurisdiction in which the conviction was
8 obtained, any other judge who is sitting in the criminal court where the
9 judgment of conviction was entered.

10 (c) "Prosecutor" shall mean the prosecutor's office that prosecuted
11 the eligible offense.

12 1-a. The chief administrator of the courts shall, pursuant to section
13 10.40 of this chapter, prescribe a form application which may be used by
14 a defendant to apply for sealing pursuant to this section. Such form
15 application shall include all the essential elements required by this
16 section to be included in an application for sealing. Nothing in this
17 subdivision shall be read to require a defendant to use such form appli-
18 cation to apply for sealing.

19 2. (a) [~~A defendant~~] An individual who has been convicted of up to
20 [~~two~~] four eligible criminal offenses but not more than one felony
21 offense may apply to the court in which [~~he or she was~~] they were
22 convicted of [~~the~~] their most serious eligible offense to have such
23 conviction or convictions sealed. If all offenses are offenses with the
24 same classification, the application shall be made to the court in which
25 the [~~defendant~~] applicant was last convicted.

26 (b) An application shall contain (i) a copy of a certificate of dispo-
27 sition or other similar documentation for any offense for which the
28 [~~defendant~~] applicant has been convicted, or an explanation of why such
29 certificate or other documentation is not available; (ii) a sworn state-
30 ment of the [~~defendant~~] applicant as to whether [~~he or she has~~] they
31 have filed, or then intends to file, any application for sealing of any
32 other eligible offense; (iii) a copy of any other such application that
33 has been filed; and (iv) a sworn statement as to the conviction or
34 convictions for which relief is being sought[~~, and (v)~~]. Applicants may
35 submit a sworn statement of the reason or reasons why the court should,
36 in its discretion, grant such sealing, along with any supporting
37 documentation.

38 (c) A copy of any application for such sealing shall be served upon
39 the [~~district attorney of the county in which the conviction, or, if~~
40 ~~more than one, the convictions, was or were obtained~~] prosecutor which
41 prosecuted the eligible offense for which a conviction was obtained.
42 The [~~district attorney~~] prosecutor shall notify the court within forty-
43 five days if [~~he or she objects~~] they object to the application for
44 sealing. If the prosecutor has not notified the court within forty-five
45 days of their objection to the application for sealing, the court shall
46 proceed with decision on the application.

47 (d) When such application is filed with the court, it shall be
48 assigned to the sentencing judge unless more than one application is
49 filed in which case the application shall be assigned to the local
50 court, county court or the supreme court of the county in which the
51 criminal court is located, who shall request and receive from the divi-
52 sion of criminal justice services a fingerprint based criminal history
53 record of the [~~defendant~~] applicant, including any sealed or suppressed
54 records. The division of criminal justice services also shall include a
55 criminal history report, if any, from the federal bureau of investi-
56 gation regarding any criminal history information that occurred in other

1 jurisdictions. The division is hereby authorized to receive such infor-
2 mation from the federal bureau of investigation for this purpose, and to
3 make such information available to the court, which may make this infor-
4 mation available to the district attorney and the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant.

5 3. The sentencing judge, or local, county or supreme court shall
6 summarily deny the ~~[defendant's]~~ applicant's application when:

7 (a) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant is required to register as a sex offen-
8 der pursuant to article six-C of the correction law; or

9 (b) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant has previously obtained sealing of the
10 maximum number of convictions allowable under section 160.58 of ~~[the~~
11 ~~criminal procedure law]~~ this article; or

12 (c) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant has previously obtained sealing of the
13 maximum number of convictions allowable under subdivision four of this
14 section; or

15 (d) the time period specified in subdivision five of this section has
16 not yet been satisfied; or

17 (e) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant has an undisposed arrest or charge pend-
18 ing; or

19 (f) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant was convicted of any crime that is not
20 eligible for sealing under this section after the date of the entry of
21 ~~[judgement]~~ judgment of the last conviction for which sealing is sought;
22 or

23 (g) ~~[the defendant has failed to provide the court with the required~~
24 ~~sworn statement of the reasons why the court should grant the relief~~
25 ~~requested; or~~

26 ~~(h)]~~ the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant has been convicted of two or more felo-
27 nies or more than ~~[two]~~ four crimes.

28 4. Provided that the application is not summarily denied for the
29 reasons set forth in subdivision three of this section, ~~[a defendant]~~ an
30 applicant who stands convicted of up to ~~[two]~~ four eligible criminal
31 offenses~~[,]~~ may obtain sealing of violations of subdivision one of
32 section eleven hundred ninety-two of the vehicle and traffic law and
33 subdivision two of section 240.37 of the penal law, and no more than
34 ~~[two]~~ four eligible offenses but not more than one felony offense.

35 5. Any eligible offense may be sealed only after at least ten years
36 have passed since the imposition of the sentence on the defendant's
37 latest conviction or, if the defendant was sentenced to a period of
38 incarceration, including a period of incarceration imposed in conjunc-
39 tion with a sentence of probation, the defendant's latest release from
40 incarceration. In calculating the ten year period under this subdivi-
41 sion, any period of time the defendant spent incarcerated after the
42 conviction for which the application for sealing is sought, shall be
43 excluded and such ten year period shall be extended by a period or peri-
44 ods equal to the time served under such incarceration.

45 6. Upon determining that the application is not subject to mandatory
46 denial pursuant to subdivision three of this section and that the appli-
47 cation is opposed by the ~~[district attorney]~~ prosecutor, the sentencing
48 judge or local, county or supreme court shall ~~[conduct a hearing on the~~
49 ~~application in order to consider any evidence offered by either party~~
50 ~~that would aid the sentencing judge in his or her decision whether to~~
51 ~~seal the records of the defendant's convictions. No hearing is required~~
52 ~~if the district attorney does not oppose the application]~~ inform the
53 applicant of their right to supplement their application with additional
54 materials that would aid the sentencing judge in their decision or to a
55 hearing on the application in order to consider arguments by either
56 party that would aid the sentencing judge in their decision. Once the

1 applicant indicates whether they intend to proceed with or without
2 supplementation or a hearing, the sentencing judge or local, county or
3 supreme court, may proceed. The court may hold a hearing upon request
4 of the prosecutor.

5 7. ~~[In considering any such application, the sentencing judge or coun-~~
6 ~~ty or supreme court shall consider any relevant factors, including but~~
7 ~~not limited to:~~

8 ~~(a) the amount of time that has elapsed since the defendant's last~~
9 ~~conviction;~~

10 ~~(b) the circumstances and seriousness of the offense for which the~~
11 ~~defendant is seeking relief, including whether the arrest charge was not~~
12 ~~an eligible offense;~~

13 ~~(c) the circumstances and seriousness of any other offenses for which~~
14 ~~the defendant stands convicted;~~

15 ~~(d) the character of the defendant, including any measures that the~~
16 ~~defendant has taken toward rehabilitation, such as participating in~~
17 ~~treatment programs, work, or schooling, and participating in community~~
18 ~~service or other volunteer programs;~~

19 ~~(e) any statements made by the victim of the offense for which the~~
20 ~~defendant is seeking relief;~~

21 ~~(f) the impact of sealing the defendant's record upon his or her reha-~~
22 ~~bilitation and upon his or her successful and productive reentry and~~
23 ~~reintegration into society; and~~

24 ~~(g) the impact of sealing the defendant's record on public safety and~~
25 ~~upon the public's confidence in and respect for the law]~~ Upon determin-
26 ing that the application is not subject to mandatory denial pursuant to
27 subdivision three of this section, the sentencing judge or local, county
28 or supreme court shall order sealing, unless the prosecutor shows that
29 exceptional circumstances weigh against such relief. In determining
30 whether exceptional circumstances exist the court shall consider if the
31 sealing would create an unreasonable risk to public safety, balanced
32 against the benefit of sealing the record upon the applicant's success-
33 ful and productive reentry and reintegration into society.

34 8. When a sentencing judge or local, county or supreme court orders
35 sealing pursuant to this section, all official records and papers,
36 including judgments and orders of a court but not including published
37 court decisions or opinions or records and briefs on appeal, relating to
38 the arrests, prosecutions, and convictions, including all duplicates and
39 copies thereof, on file with the division of criminal justice services
40 or any court, police agency or prosecutor's office shall be sealed and
41 not made available to any person or public or private agency except as
42 provided for in subdivision nine of this section; provided, however, the
43 division shall retain any fingerprints, palmprints and photographs, or
44 digital images of the same. The clerk of such court shall immediately
45 notify the commissioner of the division of criminal justice services,
46 the heads of all appropriate police departments and other law enforce-
47 ment agencies, regarding the records that shall be sealed pursuant to
48 this section. The clerk also shall notify any court in which the
49 ~~[defendant]~~ applicant has stated, pursuant to paragraph (b) of subdivi-
50 sion two of this section, that ~~[he or she has]~~ they have filed or
51 ~~[intends]~~ intend to file an application for sealing of any other eligi-
52 ble offense.

53 9. Records sealed pursuant to this section shall be made available to:

54 (a) the ~~[defendant]~~ applicant or the ~~[defendant's]~~ applicant's desig-
55 nated agent;

1 (b) qualified agencies, as defined in subdivision nine of section
2 eight hundred thirty-five of the executive law, and federal and state
3 law enforcement agencies, when acting within the scope of their law
4 enforcement duties; or

5 (c) any state or local officer or agency with responsibility for the
6 issuance of licenses to possess guns, when the person has made applica-
7 tion for such a license; or

8 (d) any prospective employer of a police officer or peace officer as
9 those terms are defined in subdivisions thirty-three and thirty-four of
10 section 1.20 of this chapter, in relation to an application for employ-
11 ment as a police officer or peace officer; provided, however, that every
12 person who is an applicant for the position of police officer or peace
13 officer shall be furnished with a copy of all records obtained under
14 this paragraph and afforded an opportunity to make an explanation there-
15 to; or

16 (e) the criminal justice information services division of the federal
17 bureau of investigation, for the purposes of responding to queries to
18 the national instant criminal background check system regarding attempts
19 to purchase or otherwise take possession of firearms, as defined in 18
20 USC 921 (a) (3).

21 10. A conviction which is sealed pursuant to this section is included
22 within the definition of a conviction for the purposes of any criminal
23 proceeding in which the fact of a prior conviction would enhance a
24 penalty or is an element of the offense charged.

25 11. No [~~defendant~~] person shall be required or permitted to waive
26 eligibility for sealing pursuant to this section as part of a plea of
27 guilty, sentence or any agreement related to a conviction for an eligi-
28 ble offense and any such waiver shall be deemed void and wholly unen-
29 forceable.

30 12. Denial under this section is without prejudice to subsequent
31 relief under this section.

32 13. An application under this section, and all pertinent papers and
33 documents, shall be confidential and may not be made available to any
34 person or public or private agency except where specifically authorized
35 by the court.

36 § 2. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall
37 have become a law and shall apply to all offenses committed prior to,
38 on, or after such date.