

STATE OF NEW YORK

3634

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 29, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. KELLES, KIM, WEPRIN, SEAWRIGHT, SIMON, STECK, DINOWITZ, REYES, CRUZ, SHIMSKY, ZINERMAN, LEVENBERG, EPSTEIN, GIBBS, SEPTIMO -- read once and referred to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the court of claims act, the public housing law, the correction law, and the civil service law, in relation to the availability of certain benefits to exonerees; and to repeal certain provisions of the court of claims act relating thereto

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

1 Section 1. Section 8-b of the court of claims act is amended by adding
2 a new subdivision 1-a to read as follows:

3 1-a. When used in this section, unless otherwise required by the
4 context, or unless a contrary intent is expressly declared in the
5 provision to be construed, the term "exoneree" shall mean any person who
6 has been granted a judgment in a claim for unjust conviction and impri-
7 sonment under this section.

8 § 2. Subparagraphs (i) and (ii) of paragraph (b) of subdivision 5 of
9 section 8-b of the court of claims act, as added by chapter 1009 of the
10 laws of 1984, are amended to read as follows:

11 (i) [~~he has~~] they have been pardoned upon the ground of innocence of
12 the crime or crimes for which [~~he was~~] they were sentenced and which are
13 the grounds for the complaint; or (ii) [~~his~~] their judgment of
14 conviction was reversed or vacated, and the accusatory instrument
15 dismissed or, if a new trial was ordered, either [~~he was~~] they were
16 found not guilty at the new trial or [~~he was~~] they were not retried and
17 the accusatory instrument dismissed; provided that the judgement of
18 conviction was reversed or vacated, and the accusatory instrument was
19 dismissed, on any of the following grounds: (A) [~~paragraph (a), (b),~~
20 ~~(c), (e) or (g) of~~] subdivision one of section 440.10 of the criminal
21 procedure law; or (B) subdivision [~~one (where based upon grounds set~~
22 ~~forth in item (A) hereof),~~] two, three (where the count dismissed was

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

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1 the sole basis for the imprisonment complained of) or five of section
2 470.20 of the criminal procedure law; or (C) comparable provisions of
3 the former code of criminal procedure or subsequent law; or (D) the
4 statute, or application thereof, on which the accusatory instrument was
5 based violated the constitution of the United States or the state of New
6 York; and

7 § 3. Paragraph (c) of subdivision 5 of section 8-b of the court of
8 claims act, as added by chapter 1009 of the laws of 1984, is amended to
9 read as follows:

10 (c) [~~he~~] they did not commit any of the acts [~~charged in the accusato-~~
11 ~~ry instrument~~] for which they were convicted or [~~his~~] their acts or
12 omissions charged in the accusatory instrument did not constitute a
13 felony or misdemeanor against the state; and

14 § 4. Paragraph (d) of subdivision 5 of section 8-b of the court of
15 claims act, as added by chapter 1009 of the laws of 1984, is amended to
16 read as follows:

17 (d) [~~he~~] they did not by [~~his~~] their own [~~conduct~~] misconduct cause or
18 bring about [~~his~~] their conviction. For purposes of this subdivision, a
19 confession, admission or plea of guilty made or entered by the claimant
20 may not be considered evidence of misconduct unless such confession,
21 admission or plea of guilty was made or entered knowingly, voluntarily,
22 without duress and with the intent to prevent the investigation or pros-
23 ecution: (i) of the claimant for a crime unrelated to the crime or
24 crimes that were the subject of such confession, admission or plea of
25 guilty; or (ii) of another person who the claimant, at the time of such
26 confession, admission or plea, believed to be the perpetrator of the
27 crime or crimes that were the subject of such confession, admission or
28 plea.

29 § 5. Subdivision 7 of section 8-b of the court of claims act is
30 REPEALED.

31 § 6. Subdivision 6 of section 8-b of the court of claims act, as added
32 by chapter 1009 of the laws of 1984, is amended to read as follows:

33 6. If the court finds that the claimant is entitled to a judgment, it
34 shall award damages in such sum of money as the court determines will
35 fairly and reasonably compensate [~~him~~] them, as well as any benefits to
36 which the claimant is entitled under this section.

37 § 7. Section 8-b of the court of claims act is amended by adding ten
38 new subdivisions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 to read as
39 follows:

40 8. Any exoneree shall be entitled to have all records of their
41 conviction sealed pursuant to section 160.50 of the criminal procedure
42 law.

43 9. No benefits paid pursuant to this article shall be considered gross
44 income as defined in section six hundred twelve of the tax law, nor
45 shall they be taxable by any entity.

46 10. No benefits paid pursuant to this article shall be reduced by any
47 amount to compensate the state for the costs of incarcerating the exon-
48 eree.

49 11. A person who properly presents a claim pursuant to subdivisions
50 three and four of this section shall be entitled to receive a payment of
51 ten thousand dollars per month from the state for each month between the
52 time a claim is filed and the final judgment is recorded, provided
53 however that on motion of the attorney general the court may stay such
54 payment on the grounds that such claim is frivolous, that the claimant
55 is unlikely to prevail on the merits, or that the period of wrongful

1 incarceration was so short that significant damages and benefits should
2 not be awarded.

3 12. An exoneree found by the court to have served a period of wrongful
4 incarceration of more than one year or to have experienced significant
5 hardship resulting from such incarceration shall be ordered by the court
6 to be enrolled in the health benefit plan established pursuant to
7 section one hundred sixty-one of the civil service law, the supplementa-
8 ry health benefit plan established pursuant to section one hundred
9 sixty-three-a of the civil service law, and the dental insurance plan
10 established pursuant to section one hundred sixty of the civil service
11 law. The full cost of premium or subscription charges for such coverage
12 shall be paid by the state.

13 13. The exoneree shall be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees
14 incurred in the process of vacating or reversing the judgment against
15 them. The exoneree shall petition the court of claims in seeking reason-
16 able attorney's fees as against the state. Any award of attorney's fees
17 shall be reimbursable by the state.

18 14. An exoneree who enrolls at any institution of the city university
19 of New York or any institution of the state university of New York shall
20 be eligible for a tuition award in an amount equal to the tuition
21 charged at such institution, the mandatory fees charged at such institu-
22 tion and the non-tuition cost of attendance at such institution or
23 college, provided that the scholarship shall not exceed an amount that
24 is equal to the total cost of attendance determined for federal Title IV
25 student financial aid purposes.

26 15. Any and all benefits made available to parolees through the divi-
27 sion of parole shall also be made available to exonerees. Any state
28 contract with a service provider for parolees must also require the
29 service provider to also serve exonerees.

30 16. Nothing in this act shall be construed to prevent an exoneree from
31 pursuing further civil lawsuits against any state agencies or employees
32 for any reason, including in connection with the wrongful conviction.

33 17. (a) Any person claiming compensation and additional benefits under
34 this section based on a pardon that was granted on or after the effec-
35 tive date of this subdivision or the dismissal of an accusatory instru-
36 ment that occurred on or after the effective date of this subdivision
37 shall file their claim within three years after the pardon or dismissal.

38 (b) Any person who obtained a judgment under this section prior to the
39 effective date may file for additional benefits under this section with-
40 in two years after such effective date.

41 (c) Any person whose claim was dismissed prior to the effective date
42 of this section on the grounds that the claim did not satisfy clause (A)
43 or (B) of subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (b) of subdivision five of this
44 section may refile their claim under this section within two years after
45 the effective date of this subdivision.

46 (d) Any person who did not previously file a claim because their claim
47 did not satisfy clause (A) or (B) of subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (b)
48 of subdivision five of this section and is barred by the existing stat-
49 ute of limitations, may file their claim under this section within two
50 years after the effective date of this subdivision.

51 § 8. Subdivision 1 of section 156 of the public housing law is amended
52 by adding a new paragraph c to read as follows:

53 c. also for any exoneree as defined in subdivision one-a of section
54 eight-b of the court of claims act. Any benefits due to such exoneree
55 shall not be included in the calculation of probable aggregate income
56 used to determine eligibility for these dwellings. Exonerees shall be

1 assigned the highest need-based priority for placement in a dwelling
2 unit.

3 § 9. Subdivision 4 of section 404 of the correction law, as amended by
4 chapter 322 of the laws of 2021, is amended to read as follows:

5 4. Every incarcerated individual who has received mental health treat-
6 ment pursuant to this article within three years of [~~his or her~~] their
7 anticipated release date from a state correctional facility and every
8 exoneree, as defined in subdivision one-a of section eight-b of the
9 court of claims act, shall be provided with mental health discharge
10 planning and, when necessary, an appointment with a mental health
11 professional in the community who can prescribe medications following
12 discharge and sufficient mental health medications and prescriptions to
13 bridge the period between discharge and such time as such mental health
14 professional may assume care of the patient. Incarcerated individuals
15 who have refused mental health treatment may also be provided mental
16 health discharge planning and any necessary appointment with a mental
17 health professional.

18 § 10. Subdivision 2 of section 163 of the civil service law, as
19 amended by section 6 of part S of chapter 57 of the laws of 2023, is
20 amended to read as follows:

21 2. The contract or contracts shall provide for health benefits for
22 retired employees of the state and of the state colleges of agriculture,
23 home economics, industrial labor relations and veterinary medicine, the
24 state agricultural experiment station at Geneva, and any other institu-
25 tion or agency under the management and control of Cornell university as
26 the representative of the board of trustees of the state university of
27 New York, and the state college of ceramics under the management and
28 control of Alfred university as the representative of the board of trus-
29 tees of the state university of New York, and their spouses and depend-
30 ent children as defined by the regulations of the president, and exoner-
31 ees as defined in subdivision one-a of section eight-b of the court of
32 claims act, on such terms as the president may deem appropriate, and the
33 president may authorize the inclusion in the plan of the employees and
34 retired employees of public authorities, public benefit corporations,
35 school districts, special districts, district corporations, municipal
36 corporations excluding active employees and retired employees of cities
37 having a population of one million or more inhabitants whose compen-
38 sation is or was before retirement paid out of the city treasury, or
39 other appropriate agencies, subdivisions or quasi-public organizations
40 of the state, including active members of volunteer fire and volunteer
41 ambulance companies serving one or more municipal corporations pursuant
42 to subdivision seven of section ninety-two-a of the general municipal
43 law, and their spouses and dependent children as defined by the regu-
44 lations of the president. Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the
45 contrary, active members of volunteer ambulance companies serving one or
46 more municipal corporations pursuant to subdivision seven of section
47 ninety-two-a of the general municipal law shall be eligible for health
48 benefits regardless of the amount of funds derived from public sources.
49 Any such corporation, district, agency or organization electing to
50 participate in the plan shall be required to pay its proportionate share
51 of the expenses of administration of the plan in such amounts and at
52 such times as determined and fixed by the president. All amounts payable
53 for such expenses of administration shall be paid to the commissioner of
54 taxation and finance and shall be applied to the reimbursement of funds
55 previously advanced for such purposes. Neither the state nor any other
56 participant in the plan shall be charged with the particular experience

1 attributable to the employees of the participant, and all dividends or
2 retroactive rate credits shall be distributed pro-rata based upon the
3 number of employees of such participant covered by the plan.

4 § 11. This act shall take effect immediately and, except as otherwise
5 expressly provided in this act, shall apply to convictions entered
6 before, on or after such effective date.