

Winston Pro Bono Work on Conviction Sealing Featured in *The New York Times*

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On July 4, *The New York Times* published a story on “Case Closed,” the Legal Aid Society’s Conviction Sealing Project. Winston & Strawn is a partner on the project, which helps clients seal dated convictions to prevent against employment, housing, and other discrimination.

The article, “[Criminal Convictions Behind Them, Few Have Had Their Records Sealed](#),” tells the story of those who today, due to a New York State law that went into effect in October 2017, can apply to have their conviction sealed. In order to qualify, one must have no more than two misdemeanor convictions or one felony and one misdemeanor conviction, and the conviction must be at least 10 years old. Those with convictions for violent felonies and sex offenses are not eligible. Other restrictions apply.

The result of having one’s record sealed is that the conviction would stop appearing in searches of public records. However, “law enforcement agencies and employers for jobs that require a firearm could still access those records,” according to the article.

Winston Pro Bono Counsel Tara Moss commented, “New York is a very challenging place to live for anyone, with hurdles constantly set up. Every job, every opportunity there’s hurdles. Having a conviction, even a minor one, it puts up another hurdle. We’re trying to give people a leg up,” she explained.

Legal Aid lawyer Emma Goodman leads the Conviction Sealing Project and said that while the law “[is] a big improvement from what we had..., it’s not a true clean slate.” She added: “The more people who can get good jobs, the less likely they are to end up in a situation where they’re getting arrested.”

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