

2009 ASSEMBLY BILL 110

March 4, 2009 – Introduced by Representatives HRAYCHUCK, TOWNSEND, MURTHA, LEMAHIEU, SPANBAUER, GUNDERSON, A. OTT, KLEEFISCH and MURSAU, cosponsored by Senators LEIBHAM, COWLES, TAYLOR and OLSEN. Referred to Committee on Criminal Justice.

- 1 **AN ACT** *to create* 175.55 of the statutes; **relating to:** access to employment
2 records of candidates for law enforcement positions.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

In general, under current law, an employer may, but is generally not required to, provide information regarding a current or former employee who applies for a job elsewhere. This bill requires a private employer doing business in this state to provide employment information requested by a municipal or county law enforcement agency or the Department of Justice (law enforcement agency) if a person who is working or has worked for that employer applies for or is being considered for a law enforcement position with the law enforcement agency. In order for that requirement to apply, the law enforcement agency's request must be signed and in writing and be accompanied by a release, signed by the candidate for the law enforcement position, which authorizes the current or former employer to provide employment information regarding the candidate to the law enforcement agency. The bill authorizes a law enforcement agency to obtain a court order mandating the release of employment information if an employer does not comply with a proper request.

The bill contains two exceptions to the requirement that a private employer provide employment information requested by a law enforcement agency. First, if any employment information is subject to a confidentiality agreement, the employer is required to comply with the law enforcement agency's request with respect to that information only if the release specifically authorizes the employer to provide that information to the law enforcement agency. If the release does not contain such an

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authorization, the employer must inform the law enforcement agency of the existence of the confidentiality agreement and comply with the agreement. Second, if a court has prohibited the disclosure of relevant employment information, the employer must inform the law enforcement agency of the order and comply with the order.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** 175.55 of the statutes is created to read:

2 **175.55 Law enforcement officer background investigations. (1)**

3 DEFINITIONS. In this section:

4 (a) “Candidate” means a person applying or being considered for a position as
5 a law enforcement officer.

6 (b) “Employment information” means written information in connection with
7 job applications, performance evaluations, attendance records, disciplinary actions,
8 and eligibility for being rehired.

9 (c) “Law enforcement agency” means either the department of justice or a unit
10 of a political subdivision of this state that is established to prevent and detect crime
11 and enforce state laws or local ordinances and that employs one or more law
12 enforcement officers.

13 (d) “Law enforcement officer” means a person employed by either the
14 department of justice or a political subdivision of the state for the purpose of
15 detecting and preventing crime and enforcing laws or ordinances and who is
16 authorized to make arrests for violations of the laws or ordinances that the person
17 is employed to enforce.

18 (e) “Provide,” with respect to employment information, includes making
19 available for inspection.

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1 (f) “Release” means a document, signed by a candidate, authorizing the
2 candidate’s current or former employer to provide employment information
3 regarding the candidate to a law enforcement agency.

4 **(2) DISCLOSURE OF EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION.** (a) A law enforcement agency
5 may request that a candidate’s current or former employer provide employment
6 information regarding the candidate. Any such request shall be in writing, be signed
7 by an authorized representative of the law enforcement agency making the request,
8 and be accompanied by an original release.

9 (b) The employer shall comply with any request made under par. (a) with
10 respect to all employment information that is not subject to a confidentiality
11 agreement between the candidate and the employer. If some or all of the employment
12 information is subject to a confidentiality agreement, the employer shall comply with
13 a request made under par. (a) with respect to that information only if the release
14 specifically authorizes the employer to provide that information to the law
15 enforcement agency. If the release does not contain such an authorization, the
16 employer shall inform the law enforcement agency of the existence of the
17 confidentiality agreement.

18 (c) Notwithstanding par. (b), if a court has prohibited the disclosure of
19 employment information requested by a law enforcement agency under par. (a), the
20 employer shall comply with the court order but shall disclose to the law enforcement
21 agency the fact that the prohibition exists, along with information identifying the
22 court and number of the case in which the court established the prohibition.

23 **(3) REFUSAL TO DISCLOSE EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION.** If an employer refuses to
24 comply with a request for employment information under sub. (2) (b), the circuit
25 court for any county in which the employer does business or in which the law

