

Trump Administration Deactivates the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database

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The [National Law Enforcement Accountability Database \(NLEAD\)](#) was a centralized repository of official records documenting instances of misconduct related to federal law enforcement officers (LEOs) that was operated by the Department of Justice (DOJ). On January 20, 2025, President Trump [issued an executive order](#) (EO) that rescinded [EO 14074](#) (“Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices To Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety”), which was issued by President Biden on May 25, 2022. Among other things, EO 14074 directed the Attorney General (AG) to establish NLEAD. With the rescission of EO 14074, [DOJ announced](#) that NLEAD “is no longer active” and has been decommissioned “in accordance with federal standards.” The EO issued by President Trump does not affect the [National Decertification Index](#), a database of certificate or license revocation actions relating to officer misconduct operated by the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training.

This Insight provides background on NLEAD and discusses steps policymakers could pursue if Congress wanted to reestablish NLEAD or a create similar database through legislation.

EO 14074 and NLEAD

Section 5 of EO 14074 required the AG to establish NLEAD. Per the EO, the database was to be a centralized repository of official records documenting instances of LEO misconduct as well as commendations and awards. The EO required federal law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to submit the required information to the database and the AG to encourage state, local, and tribal LEAs, whose participation was voluntary, to contribute to and use the database. The EO also required the AG to provide appropriate due process protections for LEOs whose official records of misconduct were included in the database.

The EO required NLEAD to include, to the extent permitted by law, official records documenting LEO misconduct, terminations, civil judgments, and resignations or retirements while under investigation for serious misconduct or sustained complaints, or records of LEO disciplinary action based on findings of

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serious misconduct. The EO required the AG to establish appropriate procedures to ensure that the records in the database were accurate, including allowing LEOs the opportunity to review their records and to request amendment or removal of a record if it was inaccurate.

The EO required the heads of federal LEAs to use the database when making hiring, job assignment, and promotion decisions as well as when screening state, local, and tribal LEOs who participate in programs or activities controlled by federal agencies.

DOJ launched NLEAD on December 18, 2023. [The Bureau of Justice Statistics \(BJS\)](#) reported that 94 federal LEAs participated in NLEAD. More than half (54) of federal LEAs submitted all required records, while the remaining LEAs (40) reported that they did not have any qualifying incidents. Federal LEAs participating in NLEAD employed approximately 148,000 LEOs, of which 4,011 had a qualifying incident related to misconduct. NLEAD contained a total of 4,790 qualifying incidents, a majority of which (3,031) were for sustained complaints or records of disciplinary action based on findings of serious misconduct. Other incidents included termination for misconduct (737), resignation or retirement while under investigation for misconduct (481), criminal conviction (311), and suspension of the LEO's enforcement authorities related to misconduct (230). BJS reported that for the first eight months of 2024, there were 9,985 searches of NLEAD, which involved 9,362 unique federal LEOs. Searches of NLEAD resulted in 25 cross-agency matches (i.e., an applicant with one agency had a record in another agency).

LEOs with Disciplinary Issues Finding New LEA Employment

Databases such as NLEAD are established, in part, to address issues around so-called *wandering officers* (i.e., LEOs who are fired or resign under threat of termination but are later hired by another LEA). [There are a litany of stories](#) about LEOs who are alleged or found to have engaged in misconduct, including the use of excessive force, being rehired by other LEAs. There is disagreement over how common the wandering officer phenomenon is and to what extent such officers may be a threat to the public. [A 2020 study of LEOs in Florida](#) found the following:

- There are almost 1,100 wandering officers in any given year in Florida, and they constitute about 3% of all officers in the state.
- Fired officers tend to take longer to find new work than officers who separate from their agency voluntarily. Fired officers also tend to move to smaller agencies with fewer resources, in communities with slightly higher proportions of residents of color.
- Wandering officers are more likely to be fired from their next job or to receive a complaint for a “moral character violation” than both officers hired as rookies and those hired as veterans who have never been fired.

[Another study in Texas](#) found that one-quarter of police officers who were dishonorably discharged from their previous agency were hired by a new LEA. Rehires were generally concentrated in small agencies and less densely populated areas.

Legislative Options

Should policymakers have concerns that federal LEAs no longer have access to NLEAD records to check whether applicants for LEO positions have been fired from a previous federal LEA, they could pursue reestablishing NLEAD or creating a similar database through legislation. For example, in the 117th Congress, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 (H.R. 1280) would have required DOJ to establish a public National Police Misconduct Registry. The registry would have contained records of substantiated, pending, and unfounded complaints filed against LEOs, disciplinary records, and termination records. Records would have indicated whether the complaint involved the use of force or racial profiling. The registry would have also included records of lawsuits and settlements against LEOs.

Under the proposal, for state and local governments, submitting records to the registry would have been a condition for receiving funding under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program. Federal LEAs would have been required to submit records to the registry. DOJ would have been required to make information in the registry searchable through a public website.

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