

The logo icon for the Utah Judiciary, featuring a stylized building with three columns and a blue square element.

UTAH  
**JUDICIARY**

**Budget Presentation**  
**February 5, 2026**





**The mission of the Utah Courts is to provide the people an open, fair, efficient, and independent system for the advancement of justice under the law.**

# Judiciary Overview



# Supreme Court

(7 Justices, two of whom are pending)



# Court of Appeals

(9 Judges, two of whom are pending)



# District Courts

(81 Judges, 11 Commissioners)



# Juvenile Courts

(33 Judges)



# Business and Chancery Court

(1 Judge)



# Justice Courts

(67 Judges in 104 courts)



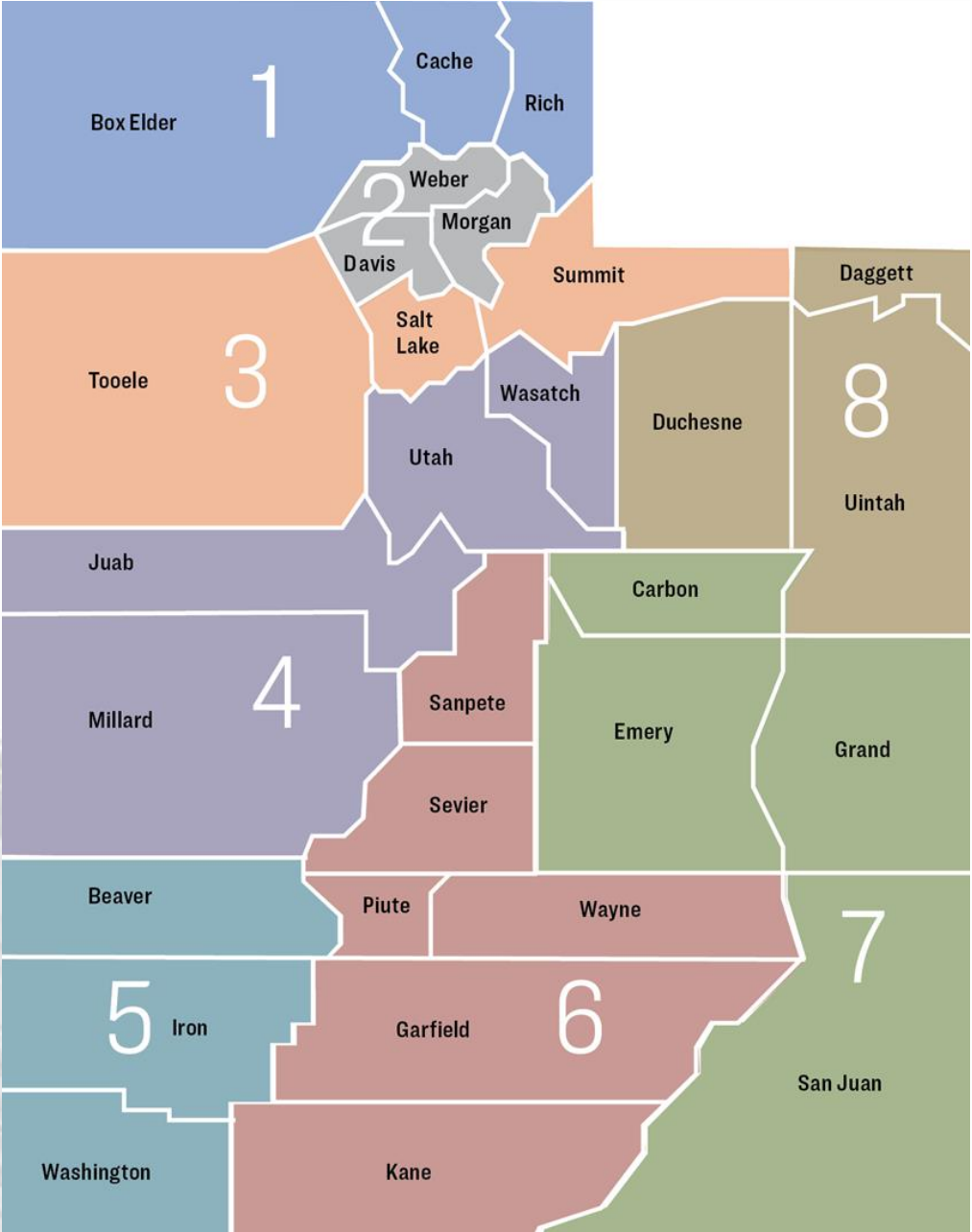
# Utah Judicial Council

Created in the Utah Constitution and given the mandate to “adopt rules for the administration of the courts of the state.”

- ❑ 17 members representing all court levels and the Utah State Bar
- ❑ Presiding officer is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- ❑ Establishes standards for the operations of the state courts (facilities, security, support services, staffing levels, etc.)
- ❑ Oversees the budget of the Judiciary



# Eight Judicial Districts



# Judiciary Overview

## Workforce

- ❑ 1,118 employees through the entire state
  - District Court, Juvenile Court, and Business and Chancery Court (790)
  - Appellate Courts (50)
  - Guardian ad Litem (88)
  - Administrative Office of the Courts (190)
- ❑ Most common positions
  - Judicial Assistant (380)
  - Probation Officer (130)
  - Case Manager (71)
  - Law Clerk Attorney (65)



# Judiciary Overview

## Workforce – Why They Work for the Judiciary

“Every task I do helps ensure that justice runs smoothly. It’s not just paperwork—it’s being part of something that truly matters.”

“Helping others navigate the court system and seeing success stories, especially in recovery courts, reminds me why this work matters.”

“Working for the Judiciary means standing behind values that make a difference—fairness, integrity, and service to the public.”

“Public service is about showing up for people when they need it most.”

“I want to make sure every child is treated fairly and has the resources to succeed—now and in the future.”

“A child’s past should never define their future. Everyday I have the opportunity to help change someone’s life for the better.”

# Recent Initiatives



# Recent Initiatives

## System Review

### Purpose

- ❑ Strengthen how the Utah Judiciary functions as both a service-provider and an employer
- ❑ Support long-term effectiveness, transparency, and employee well-being

### Approach

- ❑ Comprehensive system review conducted by the National Center for State Courts, informed by statewide surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- ❑ Evaluated core administrative and staffing practices, workflows, and workplace culture

### Progress to Date

- ❑ 54% of recommendations completed; 26% currently in progress
- ❑ Remaining recommendations under exploration

# Recent Initiatives

## AI Policies

Responsibly leverage the power of artificial intelligence to advance the mission of the Judiciary.

### Judicial Council Policies

- ❑ AI may assist with certain tasks, but it does not replace human judgment. Humans always remain fully responsible for work product.
- ❑ Only approved or provided tools are authorized.
- ❑ AI users must complete the required training.
- ❑ Employees must obtain approval from the judicial officer when using AI on behalf of the judicial officer.
- ❑ AI users must comply with restrictions on use of non-public and sensitive information.

### Authorized Uses by Judicial Officers and Employees

- ❑ Preparing educational materials
- ❑ Conducting legal research
- ❑ Drafting documents
- ❑ Creating surveys
- ❑ Testing readability and comprehension of forms and instructions
- ❑ Writing instructions for using new software
- ❑ Taking administrative meeting minutes

# Recent Initiatives

## Town Hall Meetings

- ❑ Town Hall meetings have been held or are scheduled in all judicial districts
- ❑ Judges and court staff attend
- ❑ Community partners and the general public are invited
- ❑ The purposes of the meetings are to explain how courts function and to provide a space for people to ask questions and make suggestions about the court process

# Recent Initiatives

## Judicial Assistant Training

- ❑ Judicial Assistants play a critical role in courtroom operations and public service
- ❑ Training historically developed locally and varied from district to district and courthouse to courthouse
- ❑ Training has been refined and aligned training to:
  - Create a consistent and reliable training foundation
  - Reduce onboarding gaps
  - Better support judges, staff, and the public statewide

# Recent Initiatives

## Judicial Assistant Training

### Statewide Foundation

- ❑ Core, standardized training developed centrally for all Judicial Assistants
- ❑ Includes training in ethics, safety, customer service, court structure, and technology

### Role-Specific Skill Development

- ❑ Structured training delivered over time
- ❑ Focuses on case processing, record-keeping, and courtroom support

### Local Orientation

- ❑ District-specific procedures and mentoring
- ❑ Local practices reinforced within statewide standards

# Recent Initiatives

## Investing In Our People

### Goals

- ❑ Improve employee retention and job satisfaction
- ❑ Reduce operational strain caused by vacancies
- ❑ Increase continuity for judges, staff, and court users
- ❑ Improve service to the public

### Targeted Investments

- ❑ Compensation and retention tools
- ❑ Strategic staffing increases
- ❑ Enhanced wellness benefits

# Recent Initiatives

## Interpreter Training

- ❑ The Judiciary continues to experience a shortage of qualified court interpreters.
- ❑ The interpreter market shifted significantly during and after the pandemic.
- ❑ Recruitment efforts have expanded, but certification remains a significant barrier.
- ❑ The Judiciary partnered with Utah State University to build a sustainable training pipeline.

# Recent Initiatives

## Interpreter Training

- ❑ Statewide partnership with Utah State University launched on January 31, 2026
- ❑ Builds on USU's existing expertise in interpreter education
- ❑ Three-module training program focused on:
  - Legal system foundations
  - Court interpreting skills and ethics
  - Certification exam preparation
- ❑ Designed to increase certification exam readiness and success

# Budget Reductions



# Budget Reductions

- ❑ Eliminating judicial assistant positions would be devastating to the Judiciary. Weighted caseload studies currently show a need for 35 more judicial assistant positions than we currently have.

# What is a Weighted Caseload?

- ❑ A method to measure the work of the Judiciary and assess how many judicial officers or staff are needed to process that work in a particular jurisdiction
- ❑ It measures the resources needed relative to the resources available.

# How Do We Calculate a Weighted Caseload?

We combine several different data sources.

- ❑ Survey of judges or staff and ask them to estimate time spent on tasks like order writing, prep, and signing tasks
- ❑ Application metadata: We track how long it takes judges to review things like warrants and probable cause reviews using metadata from DPS.
- ❑ Time study: Interns to listen to hearings individually and record how long they take.

The data we collect allow us to create case weights, which is an estimation of the amount of time each type of case typically takes.

# Budget Reductions

- ❑ Eliminating judicial assistant positions would be devastating to the Judiciary. Weighted caseload studies currently show a need for 35 more judicial assistant positions than we currently have.
- ❑ Eliminating law clerk positions would also have a significant and detrimental impact on the work of the Judiciary.
- ❑ If this subcommittee determines that personnel reductions are necessary, the Judiciary recommends holding positions open rather than cutting positions. (This would still negatively impact the operations of the Judiciary.)
- ❑ The Judiciary recommends revenue enhancements through increases in filing fees.

# Budget Requests



# Priority #1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention

(\$5,899,800 ongoing)

- ❑ Funds salary increases to improve retention of core courthouse workforce
  - Judicial assistants, Managers, Probation Officers, Administrative staff, etc.
- ❑ Workforce challenges:
  - Approximately 20% turnover over the past four years
  - Loss of institutional knowledge
  - Increased strain on remaining staff
  - Inconsistent support to judicial officers and court operations
- ❑ Stable staffing is critical to consistent court operations statewide.

# Priority #1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention

## Judicial Assistant Turnover



# Priority #1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention

Average Judicial Assistant Tenure (Years)



# Priority #1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention

## Why are Judicial Assistants Leaving?

- ❑ Pay
- ❑ Stress
- ❑ Trauma
- ❑ Lack of flexibility
- ❑ Pursue additional education

# Priority #1 – Core Courthouse Workforce Retention

## System Impacts of Core Workforce Turnover

- ❑ When experienced employees leave, their knowledge and skills go with them.
- ❑ Training new employees takes time for full proficiency.
- ❑ Existing team members take on extra duties, which may lead to lower productivity, errors, and job dissatisfaction.
- ❑ Managers take on employees' responsibilities, pulling them away from their own responsibilities.
- ❑ Court patrons may experience subpar service.

## #2 – Judicial Officers and Support Staff

(\$9,211,600 ongoing; \$1,380,000 one-time)

- ❑ Utah judicial workload studies demonstrate a need for:
  - 10 new judges (8 District, 1 Juvenile, 1 Court of Appeals)
  - 4 commissioners
  - Associated support staff
- ❑ Includes one-time funding to complete a shelled courtroom in Tooele County
- ❑ Communicates the actual need for judicial officers based on the weighted caseload study

Court	Positions	District(s)
Court of Appeals	1	Statewide
Juvenile Court	1	4th District
District Court	8	1st–6th Districts (x3 in 3rd district)
Court Commissioners	4	2nd–4th Districts (x2 in 3rd district)

# Judicial Officers and Support Staff

## SB 134

Court	Judicial Positions	Staff Positions	Implementation Plan
Supreme Court	2	5	Build new chambers and staff offices. Purchase furniture. Modify bench in Supreme Courtroom. Begin work as soon as funds are appropriated (construction costs=\$1,675,540). Space will be ready approximately eight months after project starts.
Court of Appeals	2	4	Touch up existing chambers and staff offices. Purchase furniture. Space will be ready before the beginning of FY27.
Third District Court	1	2.5	First choice: Finish shelled courtroom in Tooele. (Construction costs of \$1,380,000 are currently not funded.) Second choice: Use finished Juvenile Court courtroom in West Jordan. Offset Caseload in Tooele where possible.
Fourth District Court	1	2.5	Touch up existing chambers and staff offices in Provo. Space will be ready before the beginning of FY27.
Fifth District Court	1	2.5	Touch up existing chambers and staff offices in St. George. Purchase furniture. Install AV system. Space will be ready November 1.

# #3 – Sixth District Training Coordinator

(\$102,300 ongoing)

- ❑ Sixth District spans six counties and more than 16,000 square miles
- ❑ Currently the only judicial district without a training coordinator
- ❑ Without this role, consistent training and implementation are challenging
- ❑ Establishing a training coordinator would:
  - Improve staff readiness
  - Increase operational efficiency
  - Support consistent service delivery across the district

# #4 – Integrated Domestic Violence Court

(\$1,972,600 ongoing; \$1,380,000 one-time)

- ❑ Implements a “one judge, one family” model in Tooele County
- ❑ Provides consistent oversight across related cases
- ❑ Improves:
  - Victim and child safety
  - Defendant accountability
  - Coordination of services
- ❑ Includes specialized resources:
  - Judges and staff with advanced domestic violence training
  - A dedicated Guardian ad Litem
  - Legal representation for litigants
  - Access to treatment services and supervised visitation

# #5 – Domestic Violence Courts

(\$618,600 ongoing)

- ❑ Supports Domestic Violence Courts in Grand and Wasatch Counties
- ❑ Addresses resource gaps limiting court effectiveness
- ❑ Ongoing funding would provide access to:
  - Domestic violence treatment
  - Substance use treatment
  - Mental health services
- ❑ Includes a shared, full-time Domestic Violence Court Coordinator



# Guardianship Signature Program Attorney Pass-Through (\$667,600 ongoing)

*Unnumbered Budget Priority – Statutory Requirement*

- ❑ Utah law guarantees the right to counsel in guardianship proceedings
- ❑ No dedicated funding currently exists for indigent representation
- ❑ Reliance on volunteer attorneys has been insufficient:
  - 62% of qualifying cases lack attorney involvement
- ❑ Funding would support:
  - A program manager
  - Two FTE-equivalent contract attorneys
- ❑ Ensures compliance with statutory requirements and due process



Thank you