

JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING JUSTICE COURT REFORM

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Nelson T. Abbott

Senate Sponsor: Kirk A. Cullimore

LONG TITLE

Committee Note:

The Judiciary Interim Committee recommended this bill.

Legislative Vote: 15 voting for 0 voting against 2 absent

General Description:

This resolution expresses support for justice court reform and the phased implementation of justice court reform.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ expresses support for justice court reform;
- ▶ expresses support for the proposal by the Justice Court Reform Task Force to bring cases from the justice court into the state court system; and
- ▶ expresses the Legislature's intent to implement justice court reform in phases by piloting justice court reform in two counties beginning January 1, 2026.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, the state recognizes the need for a court system that is fair, open, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the residents of Utah;



28 WHEREAS, the Legislature has studied the issue of justice court reform in recent years;
29 WHEREAS, the Legislature created the Justice Court Reform Task Force in H.B. 210,
30 Justice Court Changes, in the 2023 General Session to review the court system of this state and
31 make recommendations regarding justice courts;

32 WHEREAS, the Justice Court Reform Task Force has identified several issues with the
33 structure and operations of justice courts, including:

- 34 • the lack of meaningful appellate review of justice court decisions
35 because justice courts are not courts of record and appeals from justice
36 courts allow cases to be tried again;
- 37 • the inconsistent provision of indigent defense services and limited access
38 to substance abuse and mental health treatment at the justice court level;
- 39 and
- 40 • negative perceptions of justice courts related to the generation of local
41 government revenue through fines and fees; and

42 WHEREAS, to address the aforementioned issues, the Justice Court Reform Task Force
43 has proposed bringing certain cases from the justice court into the state court system, including
44 class B and C misdemeanors and small claims cases where the plaintiff is a business:

45 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
46 supports justice court reform and the Justice Court Reform Task Force's proposal to bring
47 certain cases from the justice court into the state court system, including class B and C
48 misdemeanors and small claims cases where the plaintiff is a business.

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature intends to implement justice court
50 reform in phases with a completion date of January 1, 2031.

51 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature intends for the first phase to begin
52 in the 2025 General Session by implementing legislation to pilot justice court reform in two
53 counties starting January 1, 2026.