



Spencer J. Cox  
Governor

**EXECUTIVE ORDER**  
**2025-02**

*Enhancing Utah's Criminal Justice Strategy*

**WHEREAS**, criminal justice policy is an essential part of keeping Utah a safe place to live, work, and raise a family;

**WHEREAS**, a key component of criminal justice efforts is ensuring that people who commit crimes in our state are held accountable;

**WHEREAS**, legislative efforts to increase penalties for criminal offenses have vastly increased in recent years;

**WHEREAS**, our state legislature has added, enhanced, or expanded an average of 40 offenses each year from 2020–2024;

**WHEREAS**, while adding or enhancing criminal offenses may be a sound or even necessary approach, doing so at the current rate, particularly without a comprehensive strategy, is unsustainable;

**WHEREAS**, changes to criminal offenses need time and attention for proper implementation and continual changes can hinder that process;

**WHEREAS**, enhancing offenses increases the burden on our state’s correctional and other criminal justice institutions;

**WHEREAS**, a successful criminal justice strategy must be informed by the realities of the resources and other constraints that exist;

**WHEREAS**, a coordinated effort to evaluate how current criminal justice laws and policies are serving the state — and developing a comprehensive framework — will improve criminal justice efforts in our state;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Spencer J. Cox, governor of the state of Utah, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of this state, do hereby order the following:

1. **Purpose.** The purposes of this Executive Order are to:
  - a. Create a task force to assist criminal justice efforts in our state;
  - b. Establish principles for a criminal justice framework;
  - c. Provide recommendations to the governor and Utah Legislature; and
  - d. Evaluate criminal offenses that directly connect to the work of state agencies.
  
2. **Application.** This order applies to all state agencies, as defined below.
  
3. **Definitions.** As used in this order:
  - a. “Agency”
    - i. Includes:
      1. a department, division, office, bureau, or other organization within the state executive branch, including the State Tax Commission, the National Guard, and the Board of Pardons and Parole; and
    - ii. does not include:
      1. an institution of higher education;
      2. the Utah Board of Higher Education;
      3. the State Board of Education;
      4. an independent entity as defined in Utah Code § 63E-1-102;
      5. the Attorney General's Office;
      6. the State Auditor's Office;
      7. the State Treasurer's Office;
      8. the Legislative Branch; or
      9. the Judicial Branch.
  
4. **Establishing a Criminal Justice Task Force.**
  - a. This order establishes a Criminal Justice Task Force (“Task Force”).

- b. The Task Force consists of the following members:
  - i. the executive director of the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (the “Commission”) or the executive director’s designee, who shall serve as the chair of the Task Force;
  - ii. the commissioner of public safety or the commissioner’s designee;
  - iii. the executive director of the Department of Corrections or the executive director’s designee;
  - iv. the chair of the Board of Pardons and Parole or the chair’s designee;
  - v. the executive director of Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget or the executive director’s designee;
  - vi. a representative of any other state agency deemed necessary to accomplish the Task Force’s responsibilities;
  - vii. a member of the Utah Senate, if a member accepts the invitation to participate and the president of the Utah Senate agrees; and
  - viii. a member of the Utah House of Representatives, if a member accepts the invitation to participate and the speaker of the Utah House of Representatives agrees.
- c. The Task Force chair shall ask the speaker of the Utah House of Representatives and the president of the Utah Senate to designate which member they wish to have participate in the Task Force, if the speaker and the president agree to have members of the Utah Legislature participate.
- d. The Task Force shall develop a framework (“Framework”) to better inform criminal justice policy.
- e. The Task Force shall deliver the Framework to the governor and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee no later than October 1, 2025.
- f. The Task Force shall consult with the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee in developing the Framework.
- g. The Task Force may consult with other governmental or non-governmental entities, including the Utah Judiciary, the Utah Office of the Attorney General, and other criminal justice stakeholders, in developing the Framework.

## **5. Contents of Framework.**

- a. The Framework created by the Task Force shall consider the following:
  - i. Public safety;
  - ii. Deterrence;
  - iii. Proportionality;
  - iv. Judicial discretion and consistency;
  - v. Rehabilitation, programming, and treatment;
  - vi. Recidivism;

- vii. Costs and resources;
- viii. Jail and prison capacity;
- ix. Victim needs; and
- x. Research and data.

**6. Report on Criminal Offenses.**

- a. The Commission shall deliver the Framework to state agencies as soon as the Framework is complete under Subsection (4)(d).
- b. On or before April 1, 2026, state agencies shall use the Framework to complete the criminal offense review required by H.B. 353 (2025).
- c. On or before July 1, 2026, the Commission shall submit the report required by H.B. 353 (2025) to the governor and the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee.

**THIS ORDER** is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until July 1, 2026.



**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Utah. Done, on this, the 27th day of March, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Spencer J. Cox'.

Spencer J. Cox  
Governor, State of Utah

**ATTEST:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deidre M. Henderson'.

Deidre M. Henderson  
Lieutenant Governor, State of Utah