

## Law Department

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<http://www.seattle.gov/cityattorney>

### Department Overview

The department provides legal advice to City officials, represents the City in litigation, and protects the public health, safety, and welfare of the community by prosecuting violations of City criminal and civil ordinances and state law. The four department divisions are described below.

The **Administration Division** provides executive leadership, communications, and operational support for the entire department. It is comprised of the executive leadership team, human resources, finance, media relations, and information technology staff.

The **Civil Division** provides legal counsel and representation to the City's elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels of county, state, federal courts, and administrative agencies. The Civil Division is organized into eight specialized areas of practice: Employment, Environmental Protection, Land Use, Constitutional and Complex Litigation, Government Affairs, Torts, Civil Enforcement, and Contracts & Utilities.

The **Criminal Division** prosecutes misdemeanor crimes in Seattle Municipal Court, provides legal advice to City clients on criminal justice matters, monitors state criminal justice legislation of interest to the City, and participates in criminal justice reform efforts, policy development and management of the criminal justice system. The Criminal Division is comprised of a Prosecution Support Unit, Case Preparation Unit, Domestic Violence Unit (prosecutors and victim advocates), Appeals, Review and Filing Unit, Specialty Courts Unit (Infractions, Mental Health, Veterans' Court, Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD), and Pre-filing Diversion), and Trial Team Unit.

The **Precinct Liaisons** support a program where attorneys work in each of the City's police precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough, and effective approach.

### Budget Snapshot

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
<b>Department Support</b>				
General Fund Support	44,697,465	46,175,668	48,561,990	48,537,547
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>44,697,465</b>	<b>46,175,668</b>	<b>48,561,990</b>	<b>48,537,547</b>
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>44,697,465</b>	<b>46,175,668</b>	<b>48,561,990</b>	<b>48,537,547</b>
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	209.80	209.80	209.80	213.80

\* FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here

### Budget Overview

## **Law Department**

The City's 2026 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Law Department (LAW). The department will continue to invest in programs such as prosecution of misdemeanors, advise on legal matters, and provide legal counsel to the City's elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels.

The 2026 budget is adjusted for minor Citywide and departmental technical changes. Included is a legislated change in 2025 establishing the Drug Prosecution Alternative in coordination with the City Attorney's Office and the Seattle Municipal Court. This ongoing program is an alternative for individuals charged with a drug crime or where an incident indicates a connection to substance abuse. Another proposed change will adjust revenue to fund 7.0 FTE in LAW through the General Fund rather than the Judgment and Claims Fund and allocate costs across fund sources.

## Law Department

### Incremental Budget Changes

#### Law Department

	2026 Budget	FTE
<b>Total 2026 Endorsed Budget</b>	<b>48,561,990</b>	<b>209.80</b>
<b>Baseline</b>		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(188,326)	-
Net-Zero Technical Adjustments	-	-
Healthcare Billing Corrections	-	-
Removal of One-Time Appropriation	(149,210)	-
<b>Proposed Operating</b>		
Judgment Claims Fund Revenue Adjustment	-	-
<b>Proposed Technical</b>		
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	786,906	4.00
Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget	(447,798)	-
SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction	(26,014)	-
<b>Total Incremental Changes</b>	<b>\$(24,442)</b>	<b>4.00</b>
<b>Total 2026 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>\$48,537,547</b>	<b>213.80</b>

### Description of Incremental Budget Changes

#### Baseline

##### Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(188,326)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

##### Net-Zero Technical Adjustments

Expenditures -

Revenues -

These technical changes align planned expenditures and budget between projects and divisions. These changes have no net financial impact.

# Law Department

## Healthcare Billing Corrections

Expenditures -

This item is a technical change that aligns the budget for health care costs with where those expenses are realized. There is a net-zero impact.

## Removal of One-Time Appropriation

Expenditures \$(149,210)

This item removes one-time salary and benefits appropriated to the Civil Division funding a paralegal for a memorandum of agreement with Seattle City Light. LAW used a temporary position when originally appropriated in the 2025 Adopted Budget to assist with collection on past-due accounts and now this work is complete.

## Proposed Operating

### Judgment Claims Fund Revenue Adjustment

Revenues \$(1,788,438)

This item changes the underlying revenue source starting in 2026 and ongoing from the Judgment and Claims Fund to the General Fund to pay for staff in the Civil Division that includes 5.0 FTE attorneys and 2.0 FTE e-Discovery staff. These positions were previously funded solely by the Judgment and Claims Fund. This change is necessary to better align the work being done by the staff in the Civil Division for all city departments and revenues collected funding. The revenues supporting the Civil Division budget are allocated over multiple funds for reimbursement based on usage. This allocation process is calculated at the beginning of each biennial budget process. There will be a General Fund savings realized in 2027 when the allocation rates are re-calculated.

## Proposed Technical

### Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures	\$786,906
Revenues	\$141,035
Position Allocation	4.00

This change includes ongoing budget and/or position changes resulting from current year legislation in 2025, including the Year End Supplemental Ordinance. This includes the Drug Prosecution Alternative program that was established in 2025 in coordination with the Seattle Municipal Court. This ongoing program is an alternative for individuals charged with Possession, Use of Controlled Substances, Stay Out of Drug Area (SODA) violations, and incidents where the facts of the case indicate a direct connection/nexus to substance abuse. The program is supported by an Assistant City Prosecutor and a Legal Assistant in the Law Department. This category also includes the addition of an Assistant City Attorney and a Legal Assistant to address the City's need to respond to actions taken by the Federal government including Executive Orders that put the City's federal grants at risk. Finally, it includes an increase to an existing MOA between the Law Department and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) regarding support for tax related issues. This item increases the support provided by Law and reimbursed by FAS from 1.5 FTE of an Assistant City Attorney to 2.0 FTE.

### Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget

Expenditures \$(447,798)

This centrally administered change adjusts base budget appropriations to reflect the proper Annual Wage Increase (AWI) increment for 2026, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of City Unions for personnel costs. AWI increments are determined based on the average change in the local Consumer Price Index

## Law Department

(CPI). This change represents a true-up between the forecasted CPI assumption included in the Endorsed Budget and the actual CPI data.

### **SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction**

Expenditures	\$(26,014)
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The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2025, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.17% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.06%.

## Law Department

### Expenditure Overview

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
<b>Appropriations</b>				
<b>LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration</b>				
00100 - General Fund	14,625,432	14,815,398	15,715,870	15,663,502
<b>Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1100</b>	<b>14,625,432</b>	<b>14,815,398</b>	<b>15,715,870</b>	<b>15,663,502</b>
<b>LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil</b>				
00100 - General Fund	17,998,409	18,656,863	19,560,302	19,525,023
<b>Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1300</b>	<b>17,998,409</b>	<b>18,656,863</b>	<b>19,560,302</b>	<b>19,525,023</b>
<b>LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal</b>				
00100 - General Fund	11,318,039	11,888,858	12,432,047	12,509,318
<b>Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1500</b>	<b>11,318,039</b>	<b>11,888,858</b>	<b>12,432,047</b>	<b>12,509,318</b>
<b>LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison</b>				
00100 - General Fund	755,584	814,549	853,771	839,704
<b>Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1700</b>	<b>755,584</b>	<b>814,549</b>	<b>853,771</b>	<b>839,704</b>
<b>Department Total</b>	<b>44,697,465</b>	<b>46,175,668</b>	<b>48,561,990</b>	<b>48,537,547</b>
<b>Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*</b>	<b>209.80</b>	<b>209.80</b>	<b>209.80</b>	<b>213.80</b>

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### Budget Summary by Fund Law Department

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	44,697,465	46,175,668	48,561,990	48,537,547
<b>Budget Totals for LAW</b>	<b>44,697,465</b>	<b>46,175,668</b>	<b>48,561,990</b>	<b>48,537,547</b>

## Law Department

### Revenue Overview

#### 2026 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
333110	Ind Fed Grants	235,410	-	-	-
341060	Photocopy Svcs	19	-	-	-
341180	Legal Service Fees	4,337,718	3,045,777	3,137,340	1,653,385
341280	Records Svc Charges	1	-	-	-
341900	General Government-Other Rev	10,358,045	11,011,531	11,643,384	11,643,384
343320	Recoveries-Sundry	280	-	-	-
360690	Building/Oth Space Rent	51,600	-	-	-
397010	Operating Transfers In	-	434,000	458,000	-
<b>Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund</b>		<b>14,983,074</b>	<b>14,491,308</b>	<b>15,238,724</b>	<b>13,296,769</b>
<b>Total LAW Resources</b>		<b>14,983,074</b>	<b>14,491,308</b>	<b>15,238,724</b>	<b>13,296,769</b>

## Law Department

### **LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration**

The purpose of the Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide executive, financial, technological, administrative and managerial support to the Department.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Citywide Indirect Costs	5,906,460	7,094,645	7,534,736	7,489,324
Departmental Indirect Costs	5,460,389	3,300,801	3,451,343	3,500,441
Pooled Benefits	3,258,583	4,419,952	4,729,791	4,673,737
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,625,432</b>	<b>14,815,398</b>	<b>15,715,870</b>	<b>15,663,502</b>
Full-time Equivalents Total*	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

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*The following information summarizes the programs in Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level:*

#### **Citywide Indirect Costs**

<b>Expenditures/FTE</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Citywide Indirect Costs	5,906,460	7,094,645	7,534,736	7,489,324

#### **Departmental Indirect Costs**

<b>Expenditures/FTE</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Departmental Indirect Costs	5,460,389	3,300,801	3,451,343	3,500,441
Full Time Equivalents Total	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

#### **Pooled Benefits**

<b>Expenditures/FTE</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Pooled Benefits	3,258,583	4,419,952	4,729,791	4,673,737



## Law Department

### **LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil**

The purpose of the Civil Budget Summary Level is to provide legal advice to the City's policy-makers, and to defend and represent the City, its employees, and officials before a variety of county, state, federal courts, and administrative bodies.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Civil	17,998,409	18,656,863	19,560,302	19,525,023
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,998,409</b>	<b>18,656,863</b>	<b>19,560,302</b>	<b>19,525,023</b>
Full-time Equivalents Total*	105.30	105.30	105.30	107.30

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### **LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal**

The purpose of the Criminal Budget Summary Level includes prosecuting ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes, maintaining case information and preparing effective case files for the court appearances of prosecuting attorneys, and assisting and advocating for victims of domestic violence throughout the court process.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Criminal	11,318,039	11,888,858	12,432,047	12,509,318
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,318,039</b>	<b>11,888,858</b>	<b>12,432,047</b>	<b>12,509,318</b>
Full-time Equivalents Total*	80.00	80.00	80.00	82.00

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### **LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison**

The purpose of the Precinct Liaison Budget Summary Level is to support a program where attorneys work in each of the City's five precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough and effective approach.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2025 Adopted</b>	<b>2026 Endorsed</b>	<b>2026 Proposed</b>
Precinct Liaison	755,584	814,549	853,771	839,704
<b>Total</b>	<b>755,584</b>	<b>814,549</b>	<b>853,771</b>	<b>839,704</b>
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

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