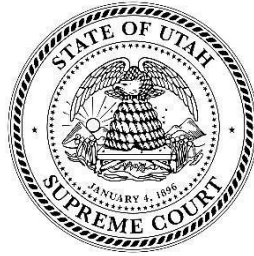


UTAH SUPREME COURT AD HOC COMMITTEE



High Volume Case Filings

Hon. Charles Stormont, Chair

November 12, 2025

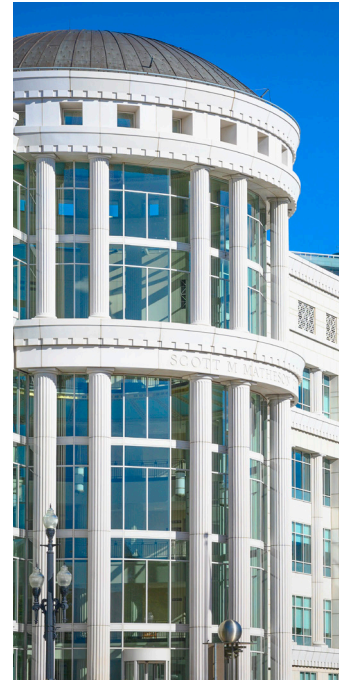
12:00 – 1:00

Judicial Council Room – Matheson Courthouse

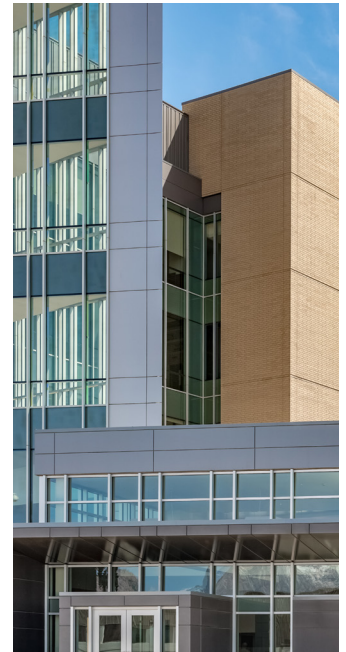
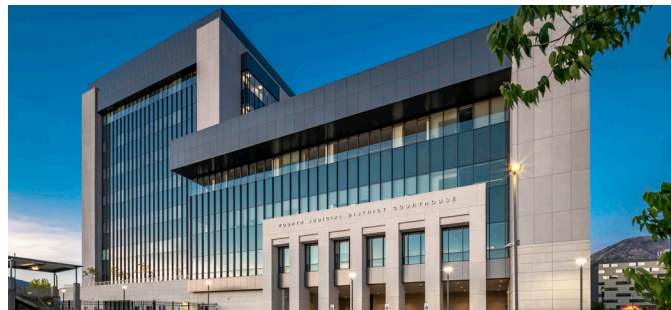
[Public Virtual Link to Join Meeting](#)

1. Welcome
2. Introduction to Committee Membership
3. Introduction of Committee's Purpose
4. Review Commitment Two, Goal One of Judiciary's Strategic Plan (Tab 1)
5. Review of Initial Committee Focus – Debt Collection Matters
6. Roadmap of Committee's Work

Tab 1



Utah Judiciary Strategic Plan



2026-2029



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Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant

Message from the Chief

Utah is nationally renowned for its legal system. But to continue our reputation for excellence, we must commit to doing more and constantly improve the system we have. When people come within the walls of a courthouse, they are entitled to an environment that is professional, respectful, and impartial. They will find court staff who are knowledgeable, helpful, and committed to assisting with the judicial process in an efficient and culturally competent manner. They will also find judges who listen carefully and respectfully, treating every individual with dignity. Our judges take an oath to decide cases based on the facts presented, reasoned argument, and established law—without regard to personal characteristics such as socioeconomic status, political beliefs, or identity. Every person can expect to be heard and to receive a fair and impartial decision, free from bias or external influence. These values are at the heart of how we serve the public each day—and they also form the foundation of our future direction.

It is my great privilege to introduce the Utah Judiciary's Three-Year Strategic Plan, a comprehensive vision that will guide our courts in ensuring justice for all Utahns and build upon the excellence we have already achieved. The Judiciary plays a critical role in upholding the rule of law, safeguarding constitutional rights, and fostering public trust. Our strategic priorities reflect our commitment to being an open, fair, inclusive, and efficient Judiciary that serves all individuals with integrity and excellence.

An Open Judiciary

Transparency and accessibility are essential to public trust. The Utah Judiciary is committed to ensuring that court procedures, decisions, and operations are open and understandable to all. Through increased access to information, expanded digital resources, and community engagement, we will continue to operate responsibly and ensure that every Utahn has meaningful access to the courts.

A Fair Judiciary

Impartiality is at the heart of justice. Our Judiciary must remain free of bias in its actions, procedures, and decisions. Building on the foundation of past efforts, including the 1996 Utah Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Fairness and the establishment of the Office of Fairness and Accountability in 2021, we reaffirm our dedication to eliminating bias, enhancing procedural fairness, and fostering trust in the legal system for all Utahns.

An Inclusive Judiciary

Justice must be welcoming and accessible to all individuals, regardless of background, language, ability, or identity. Our strategic plan prioritizes inclusivity by expanding culturally responsive programs, improving language access, and ensuring that all court users feel respected and accommodated. We are dedicated to fostering a Judiciary that serves the diverse needs of Utah's communities.

An Efficient Judiciary

Timely and fair resolution of legal matters is fundamental to justice. We are committed to adopting best practices, leveraging technology, and implementing evidence-based methodologies to enhance efficiency while maintaining the highest standards of judicial integrity. Virtual hearings, electronic filing, and modernized case management systems are just a few of the initiatives aimed at ensuring a responsive and effective judicial system.

The Utah Judiciary is steadfast in its mission to administer justice fairly and efficiently. This strategic plan reflects our dedication to continuous improvement, innovation, and service to the people of Utah. I look forward to working alongside our judicial colleagues, legal partners, and the community to bring this vision to life.



Overview

Beginning in 1996, the Judicial Council’s Utah Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Legal System conducted a comprehensive review of the Utah criminal justice system to examine issues of racial and ethnic fairness. The Task Force published a final report that included suggestions to address equity issues found within the judicial branch. A quarter-century later, the Judiciary is reflecting on the progress made since those efforts and looking toward the future.

In 2021, the Judicial Council established the Office of Fairness and Accountability, charging it — through the Committee on Fairness and Accountability — with developing a strategic plan to address bias and inequity in the judicial system. Under the applicable Rules of Judicial Administration, this strategic plan must include “the Judiciary’s goals and policy directives for meeting the court’s mission for the open, fair, and efficient administration of justice under the law while also being responsive to the state’s cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, physical, gender, and age diversities. Branch efforts in this regard will strive to eliminate bias and the appearance of bias, meet the needs of increasing numbers of self-represented litigants, remain receptive to the needs of all branch constituents, ensure that court procedures are fair and understandable, and provide culturally responsive programs and services.”

To develop this plan, the Committee on Fairness and Accountability convened a Strategic Plan Drafting Committee composed of employees and judges from every court level and district around the State. This committee has created the goals, strategies, and action items necessary to help the Judiciary meet its mission. By formalizing a strategic plan, the Judiciary can assess areas for improvement, set clear objectives, and advance its mission while upholding our commitment to excellence.

MISSION

To provide an open, fair, efficient, and independent system for the advancement of justice under the law.

JUDICIARY VALUES

- Uphold the Rule of Law**
The Judiciary applies the law equally to institutions, entities, and individuals.
- Independent**
The Judiciary is an independent, self-governing branch of government, which acts in accordance with the law at every level to make impartial decisions that are free from improper influence or pressure.
- Open**
The Judiciary operates transparently and responsibly and is accessible to all.

- Fair**
The Judiciary is impartial and free of bias in its actions, procedures, and decisions.
- Inclusive**
The Judiciary provides a respectful, welcoming, and accommodating environment for all.
- Efficient**
The Judiciary ensures the fair and timely resolution of all matters by adopting and utilizing best practices, technology, and evidence-based methodologies to serve all court uses.

Promoting Public Trust and Confidence

The Utah Judiciary is dedicated to upholding its constitutional duty to provide open courts that resolve disputes, interpret and apply the law, and safeguard the constitutional rights of all Utahns. The effectiveness of this role relies on maintaining public trust and confidence, as well as fostering strong relationships with the other branches of government. To uphold that trust, the Judiciary is committed to transparent communication, active community engagement, and exemplary service to the people of Utah.



GOAL 1

Discern public opinion regarding the Judiciary and its processes and implement changes where necessary

Strategy 1: Gather and assess current public opinion

Strategy 2: Create opportunities for ongoing feedback

GOAL 2

Communicate more effectively with the public and increase public outreach and education

Strategy 1: Increase utility of the public website

Strategy 2: Increase opportunities for public outreach by courts in each district

Strategy 3: Increase engagement with schools

Strategy 4: Increase engagement with the media

GOAL 3

Improve and expand training for all court staff and judicial officers to enhance consistency and efficiency throughout the State to improve service to the public

Strategy 1: Enhance and expand current training and practices to ensure exemplary service

GOAL 4

Increase opportunities for strategic engagement with other branches of government

Strategy 1: Continue engagement and identify new ways to engage with other branches of government

Strategy 2: Increase opportunities for engagement with Tribal Nations

COMMITMENT TWO

Increasing Access to Justice

Many obstacles hinder the promise of equal justice under the law. These challenges include the complexity of legal and judicial systems, difficulties faced by self-represented litigants, language barriers, and perceptions of bias and unfairness in governmental institutions. The Utah Judiciary is committed to reviewing and improving court processes and rules to expand access to justice. By actively seeking and addressing feedback from court patrons and community members, the Judiciary will hold itself accountable for removing barriers and ensuring equal access to justice for all.



GOAL 1

Address immediate barriers to accessing the judicial system

Strategy 1: Employ strategies to increase the understanding of court rules and procedures by non-law trained individuals

Strategy 2: Enhance our service culture

GOAL 2

Create accountability mechanisms for expanding court access and increase our capacity to improve while balancing sustainability of operations

Strategy 1: Invite community members to provide input to help us find ways to increase access to justice and continually solicit feedback from community members about court processes and their impact on the community and access to justice



COMMITMENT THREE

Ensuring Constitutional Openness

Utah's judicial system is designed to be fair and accessible to everyone. Utah's Constitutional Declaration of Rights declares that courts shall be open and that every person shall have remedy under the law without denial or delay. To uphold this principle, the Judiciary must identify and systematically eliminate practices that result in disparate treatment. These practices may exist in various areas including courthouse facilities, juror selection, access to legal resources, hiring procedures, and employee retention strategies. By gathering data in these areas, the Judiciary remains responsive to Utah's evolving community needs and ensures equal treatment for all who interact with the judicial system.



GOAL 1

Advance a fair and inclusive judiciary

Strategy 1: Identify practices and conditions that may create or contribute to disparate treatment and outcomes

Strategy 2: Identify existing data on demographics and create processes to enhance collection of demographic data

Strategy 3: Eliminate practices that create or contribute to disparate outcomes and implement practices that are just and equitable for all

GOAL 2

Provide equal opportunities for all employees

Strategy 1: Promote fair hiring practices in recruitment efforts

Strategy 2: Expand employee retention efforts

Strategy 3: Support efforts to increase and broaden the applicant pool for judicial positions

GOAL 3

Provide resources to understand and mitigate bias

Strategy 1: Expand training and educational opportunities in areas that contribute to fair treatment and outcomes

Judicial Council
Members

Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant
Chair, Utah Supreme Court

Judge David N. Mortensen
Vice Chair, Utah Court of Appeals

Judge Suchada Bazzelle
Fourth District Juvenile Court

Judge Brian Brower
Clearfield, Sunset, and Morgan County Justice Courts

Judge Jon Carpenter
Carbon County, Wellington City, and East Carbon Justice Courts

Judge Samuel Chiara
Eighth District Court

Judge Rita Cornish
Business and Chancery Court

Judge Michael DiReda
Second District Court

Judge Susan Eisenman
Third District Juvenile Court

Judge Angela Foncesbeck
First District Court

Judge James Gardner
Third District Court

Judge Michael Leavitt
Fifth District Juvenile Court

Judge Thomas Low
Fourth District Court

Judge Brendan McCullagh
West Valley City Justice Court

Judge Amber Mettler
Third District Court

Justice Paige Petersen
Utah Supreme Court

Katie Woods
Utah State Bar

Ron Gordon
Staff, State Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts

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Committee

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Chair, Court of Appeals

Judge Monica Diaz
Chair, Third District Juvenile Court

Neira Siaperas
Chair, Deputy State Court Administrator

Holly Albrecht
Facilities Coordinator

Lauren Andersen
Director of Utah Judicial Institute

Shane Bahr
District Court Administrator

Tricia Bradshaw
Clerk of Court

Sherrone Braegger
Probation Officer

Miranda Buchanan
Probation Supervisor

Spencer Cottle
Chief Probation Officer

Judge Dianna Gibson
Third District Court

Alicia Espinoza
Language Access Program Coordinator

Marketa Heslop
Judicial Case Manager

Judge Eric Jewell
Payson, Santaquin, Genola, and Goshen Justice Courts

Bryson King
Associate General Counsel

Janine Liebert
Director of Self-Help Center & Law Library

Kristy Martinez
Clerk of Court

Tania Mashburn
Director of Communications

Brielle McCourt
Judicial Assistant

Judge Richard Mrazik
Third District Court

Zerina Ocanovic
Juvenile Court Management Analyst

Bart Olsen
Director of Human Resources

Jim Peters
Justice Court Administrator

Nathanael Player
Former Self-Help Center & Law Library Director

Tiffany Power
Trial Court Executive

Jonathan Puente
Director of Office of Fairness and Accountability

Kapiolani Smith
Judicial Team Manager

Nick Stiles
Appellate Court Administrator

Cade Stubbs
Trial Court Executive

Karl Sweeney
Director of Finance

Sonia Sweeney
Juvenile Court Administrator

Erin York
Judicial Team Manager

Office of Fairness
and Accountability

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Public Outreach and Education Coordinator

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Language Access Program Coordinator

Alicia Espinoza Rodriguez
Language Access Program Coordinator

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Chair, Utah Supreme Court

Judge Monica Diaz
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Bryson King
Associate General Counsel

Tania Mashburn
Director of Communication

Shawn Newell
Public Member

Jonathan Puente
Director of Office of Fairness and Accountability

Judge Steven Roth
Retired Judge

Tucker Samuelsen
Director of Data and Research

Judge Todd Shaughnessy
Third District Court

Abram Sherrod
Public Outreach and Education Coordinator

Judge Bill Thorne
Retired Judge

Judge Danalee Welch-O'Donnal
Moab Justice Court

Justice Michael Zimmerman
Retired





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