



CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Justin M. Bibb

City of Cleveland

Department of Law

Budget Hearings
2026



Agenda

- I. Departmental Overview
- II. Core Initiatives and 2025 Progress
- III. Staffing Levels



Departmental Overview

Under the Director of Law, the department represents and provides legal advice to the Mayor, City Council, and all City departments, boards and commissions. In addition to protecting taxpayer dollars through proactive and defense litigation, the Law Department prosecutes crimes in an effort to improve the quality of life for the City's residents and visitors.



Mark Griffin
Law Director



Stephanie Melnyk
Chief Corporate Counsel



Michele Comer
Chief Counsel



Elena Boop
Chief Trial Counsel



Aqueelah Jordan
Chief Prosecutor



Delanté Thomas
Chief Ethics Officer

Civil Division

The Chief Corporate Counsel leads the transactional areas and serves as Acting Law Director in the Law Director's absence. The Chief Trial Counsel leads all litigation areas.

Admin & Special Projects

The Chief Counsel manages department operations, budget, procurement and assists with other Law department projects.

Criminal Division

The Law Director serves as Chief Prosecutor for the City of Cleveland, but delegates that authority to the Chief Assistant Prosecutor.

Ethics & Accountability

Led by Chief Ethics Officer who also assists in overseeing and representing the City in Consent Decree compliance.



Core Initiatives and 2025 Progress

Litigation

- Secured over \$ 4 million in payments, including settlements and collections in claims/cases by the City including more than \$1M in civil litigation payments to the City;
 - Saved the city hundreds of thousands of dollars by obtaining dismissals, favorable judgments and negotiated settlements;
 - Handled over 1,000 claims, subpoenas, litigation, and labor and employment matters in FY 2025.
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- **Chief Assistant Director of Law: James R. Russell**
 - **Chief Assistant Director of Law: William Menzalora**
 - **Chief Assistant Director of Law: Tiffany Fischbach**

Development

- Assists City's economic development efforts by counseling and crafting real estate and development transactions
 - Ex: Bedrock Development
 - Ex: Erieview Tower and Galleria Redevelopment
- **Chief Assistant Director of Law: Richard Bertovich**

Code Enforcement

- Focused on criminal code enforcement on nuisance properties
 - Ex: Aggressively enforced B/H codes against large property owner in Shaker Square resulting in sale to responsible buyer
 - Obtained judgment to enforce removal of underground tanks at abandoned gas stations
 - Ex: Enforced City's nuisance ordinances against establishments that pose risk to public safety
- **Chief Assistant Director of Law: David Roberts**



Core Initiatives and 2025 Progress

Operations & Sustainability

- Assists Departments of Public Utilities, Public Works, Health, Parks & Recreation, and Sustainability
 - Ex: Completed over 220 contract assignments & 80+ pieces of legislation, including lease with Westside Market
 - Ex: Assisted Water Dept obtain low/no interest loans for lead line replacements
 - Ex: Assisted Cleveland Public Power develop and implement new arbitration panel
- **Chief Assistant Director of Law: Geraldine Butler**

House Counsel

- Counsels City regarding municipal law, finance, legislation, contracts, and tax prosecution. Drafts and approves legislation
 - Ex: Drafted legislation implementing changes to address safety/security in public garages and parking lots
 - Ex: Worked with Mayor, Health, & Planning to address location of smoke shops and tobacco licensing requirements
 - Ex: Provided guidance to Fair Employment Wage Board to address living wage, pay transparency, and wage theft laws.
- **Chief Assistant Director of Law: Kevin Roberts**

Public Records

- Received and processed 29,378 requests
 - 26,117 for Public Safety
 - 2,972 from media
 - WCS: 1,882 (136% increase since 2021)
- **Chair: Amy Hough**



Core Initiatives and 2025 Progress

Criminal Division

Prosecutor's Office

- Responsible for prosecuting misdemeanor crimes, including domestic violence, assault, traffic offenses, and theft. Office reviews potential felony indictments for referral. Prosecutors review police use of deadly force and internal investigations to determine whether prosecution is fitting.
- 2025 Projects
 - Ex: Expansion of Central Booking – Added prosecutors and launched pilot program to double review time
 - Ex: Nat'l Violence Against Women Act partnership with CDP and County to expand services to victims of crime

Ethics & Accountability

Ethics Office

- Provides advice and counsel to City officials, employees, and Boards/Commissions on issues involving the application of ethics laws and navigating conflicts of interest.
 - Ex: Responded to over 150 ethics law inquiries

Consent Decree

- Represents City in Federal Consent Decree
- Challenged Monitor bills to protect taxpayer dollars
- Assisted in fulfilling large amounts of police records requests
- Provided resources and support for Police Accountability Team
- Provided legal support for civilian oversight bodies (CPC/CPRB/OPS)



Staffing

The City Law Department is divided into two divisions (criminal and civil) and two specialty areas (ethics and accountability). Staffing includes attorneys, paralegals, legal secretaries, investigators, claims examiners, clerks, and administrative assistants. Law Department headcount also includes Mayor’s Police Accountability Team (4)

2026 Budgeted Headcount	FTEs as of 1-30-26	Current Vacancies
103	98	5

