

2026 State of Justice

Attorney General Aaron D. Ford

Feb. 5, 2026

- Hello, AG Family, and welcome to the 2026 State of Justice! It's nice to see you here today, whether you're here in person or virtually. I wish we could all be together in person, but our jobs mean we work for every Nevadan, so we must work all across our great state.
- This speech is always a high point of my year – I love to discuss the wins for the people of Nevada that we have gained over the last 12 months. Because all of you are the best staff, the best coworkers, I've ever had. It is important to me that we highlight the work that YOU do for this office and for the people of the state of Nevada.
- This year, however, this speech is bittersweet. This will be the last time I give the State of Justice speech to you all as your attorney general. Over the last few months, I have been thinking about my departure from this office and the work we've done together over the last 7 years and I have, without shame, gotten emotional over it many times.
- My tenure in this office has stretched over three different presidential terms; a generational pandemic; a massive and ongoing legal fight over the harms opioid manufacturers have caused Americans; a nationwide reckoning over police brutality; and many, many more issues that have touched our state and our country.
- On Jan. 7, 2019, I stood in on the steps of the Nevada State Capitol looking out at the faces of my family and friends as I took my oath of office. Around my loved ones stood Nevadans that I had never met before, Nevadans who I would soon represent, Nevadans who I would now have the privilege of fighting for every day.
- The work that this office does directly benefits every single Nevadan, the neighbor you wave to when you get in your car in the morning; the parent of your child's best friend you see on playdates; the cashier checking you out at the gas station – these are the people you are helping every day.
- Through work holding the powerful accountable, we have saved Nevadans money; protected their rights and benefits; and stood as a bulwark against government overreach.

SAVING NEVADANS MONEY

- For example, we are currently in court along with our partners in other states taking the federal government to task over costly and unlawful tariffs. Last year, tariffs cost Nevada families nearly \$1,000. That's groceries. That's rent. That's gas. And it's money that disappeared through no fault of their own.

- This is just one example of how we are taking the federal government to task over its recent activity. And we're not just taking them on, we're winning.
 - We've saved grants worth around \$60 million to state agencies and universities that the federal administration attempted to withhold over the past 13 months.
 - This is a conservative figure, and it does not include the SNAP benefits that we successfully returned to Nevadans through our lawsuit against the USDA.
- Nor does this number include wins in the education funding freezing case, in which we saved grants that have historically been worth over \$100 million.
- We ensured nearly \$7.5 million dollars went to Nevada State College, and around \$16 million in grant funding went to UNLV along with \$15 million to UNR.
- And thanks to our work, over \$19.5 million went to the Emergency Management Performance Grant and Homeland Security Grant Program run by the state Office of Emergency Management.
- These are merely some of the wins our Office has brought into our state over the last year. These millions of dollars help fund Nevadans' education; the food on the table of Nevadans in need; the programs that our universities run for underprivileged students
- Our job, as I have always said, is justice. Justice, it must be said, is not partisan, or political, or a tool only to be used against your enemies. Justice is what is necessary for our country, our entire society, to work for the benefit of all.
- Over the last seven years of my time in this office, this has been the mantra guiding our work. This motto will continue to be our guiding beacon during my last year in office, and we will continue to work for the benefit of all Nevadans.

THE FIVE "C"S

- To ensure that we remain focused on this job, on this commitment to justice, we must remain committed to the principles underlying this work. You knew it was coming. With quite a bit of sadness that I may never get this chance again — we once more must commit to the Five Cs! — **Criminal Justice Reform, Consumer Protection, Constitutional Rights, Client Service and Community Engagement.**
- Our Solicitor General Heidi Stern's team has been working day and night for the defense of Nevadans' **Constitutional Rights** over the past year.

- Kiel Ireland, our Chief of Special Litigation, has been invaluable in this effort.
- There are issues that parties can disagree on legally, and there are issues that are plainly explained in the law, in statute, or in the Constitution.
- Besides the lawsuits we have brought to ensure federal funding remains in our state, we have ensured we stand against any efforts to strip rights away from Nevadans.
- Birthright citizenship is a plainly stated right in the Constitution, and one that has been challenged seriously for the first time in almost 130 years via an Executive Order.
 - Immediately, with no hesitation, I stepped up to defend the long-affirmed right of birthright citizenship.
- The attack on birthright citizenship is an attack on the very nature of our constitutional rights. This is a right outlined for – with extraordinarily few exceptions - every person born on American soil. To get rid of this right would require an act of Congress, and it simply cannot be done through an executive order.
- We have protected Nevadans' privacy from unconstitutional overreach as well.
 - We pushed back legally against early efforts to allow the nongovernmental "Department of Governmental Efficiency," or "DOGE," from violating the Appointments Clause of the Constitution.
- In addition, I am exceedingly proud of the work that we have done to protect the electoral rights of Nevadans and to protect state sovereignty. Our nation's free and fair elections have always been the cornerstone of the American experiment.
- In order to protect democracy, we must protect the right to vote. We must stand against any effort to dilute, to complicate, or to damage this right.
 - Thankfully, Chief Ott and the Government and Natural Resources Division have been at the ready to protect these rights.
- I am proud to say our office is co-leading a case fighting back against an unlawful executive order related to elections.
 - To put it plainly: the states oversee elections, not the federal government. We will always step in to protect that right.
- I have said since day one that if there is evidence of voter fraud, I will prosecute. When evidence was presented in a handful of cases, we did just that. I need to be clear, however: there is no evidence of widespread voter fraud, and certainly no evidence that there was enough fraud to impact the results of our elections.

- Chief Ott and his division have been vigilant in defending our state's laws giving Nevadans the right to vote by mail against those who claim incorrectly that these mail ballots have a higher incidence of voter fraud.
- In addition, Chief Engler and the Prosecutions Division are currently engaged in litigation against those individuals who misrepresented themselves as electors.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND REFORM

- As Nevada's top law enforcement official, I am proud to say we have also done champions' work in the area of the second "C:" **Criminal Justice and Reform.**
- Human trafficking is one of the most evil and pervasive problems facing our society today, and protecting our community's most vulnerable members is a key role of the Attorney General office. The safety of the public as a whole is undermined when human trafficking is not met with a strong response.
- To that end, OAG investigators work with Northern and Southern Nevada Human Trafficking Task Force operations with the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's Office and numerous other local law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada to combat human trafficking.
- Since 2019, our investigators have referred 41 cases for prosecution, 36 of which were a result of john sting operations.
- I supported legislation to make computer generated pornography a crime and passed legislation that followed the advice of leading child safety advocates to change the term "child pornography" to "child sexual abuse material" in state statute.
 - I want to thank Chief Engler for being a champion of this effort.
- Our office has been quick to call out companies that allow their AI software to churn out child sexual assault material.
- In addition, we have continued our important work to protect Nevada's children from the predatory aspects of current technology and social media.
 - We have filed lawsuits against YouTube, Kik, TikTok, Snapchat and three Meta-owned platforms: Instagram, Facebook and Messenger for the harms they have done to our children.
- These lawsuits are vital in this constantly changing world so that companies know our children are not the testing ground for new technology.
- In furtherance of our mission to protect victims and see justice done, we also worked to eliminate the decades-in-the-making rape kit backlog. In late 2020, we announced that this backlog had been entirely tested.

- Once elected as Attorney General, I served as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Rights of Survivors of Sexual Assault, which published the first ever Sexual Assault Survivors Bill of Rights.
- Strengthening support for victim has been a goal of mine as the Attorney General, which is why I am especially proud to have added Victim Support Services to the AG's Office during my tenure.
 - Thank you to Summer Harris and Tahliah Ling-Sudler, our Victim Witness Advocates.
- Also, Jamie Trevino, our Ombudsman for Victim of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking launched a new statewide victim notification system this past year. This launch was in addition to the vital work she does each and every day.
- One of the most important tasks our Office has been entrusted with is the protection of our state's Medicaid system.
- Impoverished and medically vulnerable people rely on state Medicaid services for critical health care needs and medical support. Our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, led by Chief Schulke, have been champions over the last seven years in ensuring bad actors do not abuse the Medicaid system so many Nevadans rely upon.
 - This crew obtained 154 convictions and 75 civil settlements since January 2019. That's for a grand total of \$65,247,039.75 from 2019 to 2025.
 - In one example, the MFCU concluded an investigation and prosecution that began in 2017 that resulted in eleven individuals being convicted of crimes related to their roles in Medicaid fraud and in operating fraudulent behavioral health companies. Our MFCU's work resulted in restitution of approximately \$5.5 million being ordered to be repaid to Medicaid.
- As you've heard me say before, I have often framed community relationships with law enforcement and the government as falling into one of three types of communities.
 - In the first community, there is near absolute trust in law enforcement. In the second community, trust once existed, but their relationship with law enforcement has been damaged in some way, often because of adverse experiences. And in the last community, there is virtually no trust or faith in law enforcement and the government. That trust has never existed.
- It is an integral responsibility of law enforcement to instill trust in the communities they protect. Without working to instill trust, communities will see law enforcement as outsiders coming in, rather than members of the community who are working to keep it safe.

- Unfortunately, the last seven years have seen tragic acts of violence committed by law enforcement on the citizens they are entrusted to protect.
 - In 2020, George Floyd, a father, son and community member in Minneapolis, was murdered by a police officer.
 - That same year, Louisville resident Breonna Taylor was killed during a no-knock entry by law enforcement.
 - In the aftermath of this, I knew we had to hear directly from the community on what issues they thought mattered the most for reform.
 - As such, I hosted a series of town halls called “Justice and Injustice.” I promised those participating that the conversations would be used for legislative development in the next session.
- Senate Bill 50 made drastic changes to the ability of officers to execute no-knock warrants in Nevada, and AB58 gave our office the authority to conduct pattern-and-practice investigations.
 - Both of these bills were signed on the one-year anniversary of George Floyd’s murder.
- Soon after I took office, I directed the Office to examine current policies and procedures for opportunities for reform, which culminated in Policies that Promote Justice in Prosecutions. These policies were outlined to better determine fair and equitable policies for law enforcement purposes.
 - I want to thank Assistant Attorney General Jones-Brady for her work on these policies and guidance on such matters over the years.
- As law enforcement, we swear a sacred oath to serve and protect the public, but it’s difficult to serve a public that does not trust us or that is afraid of us. We all wear the same badge and shoulder the same burden to earn the public’s trust.
- Unfortunately, federal immigration operations have shown exactly the wrong way to interact with communities. ICE’s policy allowing their agents to remain masked and unidentified is extraordinarily dangerous to both civil liberties and physical safety.
- Masks allow bad actors in law enforcement to evade detection and make it impossible for the public to determine if they are being legally detained.
- Law enforcement CAN sow seeds of trust within our communities. I know this because I have witnessed the good work our Investigations Division, helmed by Acting Chief Shaun Bowen, does.
 - Could we have a round of applause for our investigators and Acting Chief Bowen?
- We took steps to work with other law enforcement agencies to help build that trust, including by hosting Law Enforcement Summits around the state

and by working together on educational and professional efforts to build back trust in our community.

- Building trust in the community includes legal reform. After cannabis was legalized in Nevada, there was a push for legal relief for those who had been convicted of charges that were now considered legal.
 - For example, due to the work our office undertook with state partners, over 15,000 people were pardoned without the need for any additional action on their part.
- Our Post-Conviction Division's work has been vital in ensuring justice is done as well. Under Chief Heather Procter, this division has dealt with 16 wrongful conviction cases since 2019. None of these have gone to trial – a 100% success rate in this work.
- Thanks to our Criminal Prosecutions Division, we have ensured that those who would harm incarcerated individuals under our protection in Nevada's prison system saw justice.
- As an example, last year we announced homicide charges against 20 defendants for the deaths of three inmates at Ely State Prison, because justice does not stop at the prison gates.
- We've also ensured those who would seek to defraud the state face justice. We have filed charges against Steven Allen Kromer, the owner of Uprise, LLC, for allegedly diverting millions of dollars of taxpayer funds earmarked for a fiber optic project in Lovelock to his personal bank account.
- Lastly, because of the diligent work by our Grants team led by Jessica Hoban and John Dekoekkoek (DE-COCOA), our office held training events in both Las Vegas and Reno for law enforcement and others to better understand Nevada's high-risk protection order laws, better known as "red flag" laws.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

- I would like to take a moment here to applaud the work of the Bureau of Consumer Protection, Chiefs Figueroa and Krueger and every individual member of this office who works to ensure consumers are protected from those who wish to defraud them. **Consumer Protection** is an area I take very seriously, and in which our work is second to none.
- It is difficult for me to fully express how proud I am of the work this office has done to mitigate the harms done by the opioid epidemic and hold those responsible for its spread accountable.
- The vast majority of the settlement money achieved through this litigation will go towards public health efforts to remediate the harms, impact and risk caused by the opioid epidemic through one of our crowning

achievements - the One Nevada Agreement on Allocation of Opioid Recoveries.

- I am ecstatic to say that as of today, the total amount of money we have secured through the opioid settlements we pursued is over \$1.2 billion. Once the money is disbursed to the agreement's local and county-level signatories, the state's portion sits at OVER \$565 million.
- Outside of the opioid settlements, our Bureau of Consumer Protection has brought in over \$205 million in non-opioid-related recoveries since 2019.
 - That includes over \$30 million from T-Mobile; \$1.5 million from Equifax; and \$14.5 million from Google. This list is, of course, nowhere near complete.
- In addition, in order to minimize the impacts to Nevadans from a proposed merger from T-Mobile and Sprint, we negotiated a settlement under which no Nevadan would lose a job as a result of the merger; In addition T-Mobile would deploy a new, expansive 5G network; and make a charitable contribution to programs for women and minority owned business, among other requirements.
- Another win in the field of antitrust was our agreement with other states and the FTC under the Biden administration to work to block the merger between grocery store giants Kroger and Albertson's.
- We worked hard to strengthen the powers we had to hold antitrust violators accountable, as well. In the 2021 legislative session, we successfully passed Assembly Bill 47, which made important changes to our state's Unfair Trade Practices Act, especially in the review of health care consolidations, mergers and acquisitions.
- Another way the office is helping everyday Nevadans is through the AG's Consumer Advocate, who represents the interest of customers before the Public Utilities Commission. Again, hats off to Ernest Figueroa and his division for their advocacy and diligence in ensuring that power rates are reasonable and fair, and taking the PUC to task when they are not.
- Our office continues to do intensive work in reaching settlements with those companies who have harmed Nevadans, and we have brought quite a bit of money into Nevada for both the state and Nevadans themselves.
- Here are two examples:
 - We agreed to a nationwide \$7.4 billion settlement with Purdue Pharma and its owners, the Sackler family, out of which Nevada will receive \$58 million.
 - We reached a settlement with Hyundai and Kia for their sale of millions of vehicles nationwide lacking industry-standard, anti-theft technology. These companies have agreed to provide up to \$4.5 million in restitution to consumers and \$4.5 million to states.

- One portion of consumer protection work which is incredibly vital is communicating the risks to Nevadans ahead of any potential victimhood. If Nevadans know the risks of scams, cons or fraud, they can make more informed decisions.
 - As an example of the work we have done in that area, we publicly urged Nevadans to destroy their 23andMe data after the company went bankrupt and sought buyers for their assets.
- We have continued our work in the bipartisan Operation Robocall Roundup, and we are working to ensure large voice providers are not transmitting robocalls across their network.
- During the pandemic, our Bureau of Consumer Protection was on point identifying new scams that fraudsters were developing while Nevadans were being forced to adjust to a new normal that was anything but.

CLIENT SERVICE

- I know that the attorneys we have working with our clients are the best in the state. Our **client service** is one of the cornerstones of the work we do, and I know that our state agencies are in good hands when our staff is advising them. I want to give a special thank you to Craig Newby, my First Assistant Attorney General, for the work you have done in leading this team of talented and driven lawyers.
- Chief Bordelove's Boards and Open Government Division has done the vital work of supporting public trust in our governmental bodies by holding state employee trainings on state open meetings, public records and ethics laws.
- Chief Caruso's Gaming Division has helped support our state's most important industry by advising and representing the Gaming Control Board and Nevada Gaming Commission.
 - This work is wide-ranging, from extensive regulatory reviews to resolving complaints such as the disciplinary case against a former casino mogul, which resulted in a \$10 million fine.
 - This division has also worked diligently to stand up for our clients defending against illegal sports prediction markets.
- We all know the struggles this state went through during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the work we did for our clients during this time was vital for the operation of our state.
 - This work was shared by the entirety of our office, but the Health and Human Services Division, now headed up by Chief Sharon Benson, did yeoman's work for this unprecedented health care catastrophe.

- Under Chief Benson's leadership, the division continues to offer advice on complex matters such as children's mental and behavioral health.
- Under Chief Mike Detmer, the Business and Industry Division has been integral to the operations of the state's Department of Business and Industry. They have taken on complicated projects, including advising the Office of Nevada Boards, Commissions and Councils Standards in creating administrative uniformity in the boards brought under its purview.
- The Public Safety Division, headed by our very own Chief Randy Gilmer, has defended the Nevada Department of Corrections in lawsuits on both the state and federal level, as well as provided needed advice on administrative measures.
 - Our office also worked diligently with NDOC to protect the medical rights of offenders in our penal system. By 2024, every consenting offender in the system had been treated for Hepatitis C, and NDOC continues to treat all offenders within the first year of their incarceration.
- In addition to advising and representing the Department of Taxation, our Taxation Division, headed by Chief David Pope, has enforced tobacco sale laws restricting access to minors and advised the Cannabis Compliance Board on many new and emerging issues, including the creation and implementation of cannabis lounge licensing.
- Our Personnel Division, headed by Chief Cameron Vandenberg, has done vital work to ensure state employees receive reasonable disability accommodations and fair considerations of FMLA leave; ensure our client agencies have representation in employment matters; and ensure all relevant employment advice on discipline is given to our clients.
- Our office's Transportation Division, headed by Chief Gordon Goolsby, similarly works in many different areas, including advising the Department of Public Safety on Brady gun licensing issues; representing parole and probation in legal challenges; and assisting the state Department of Transportation in work to expand telecommunications and internet infrastructure throughout our state.
 - As an example of the necessary work this division does, they were instrumental in the successful award of a \$3 billion Federal Rail Administration Grant to fund the design and construction of a high-speed rail system along the I-15 corridor a few years ago.
- And when the best of client representation does not lead to resolution, Jessica Whelan and the Division of Complex Litigation steps in.
 - They work hand-in-hand with other attorneys in the Office of the Solicitor General to win in trial and appellate courts.

- Every member of our team working in client service has arduous jobs and tackles niche legal matters every day. Those jobs got even harder when we were hit with a worldwide pandemic. Our office was scattered to the wind, yet we never faltered in the work we did for our constituents and for our clients.
- We successfully stood up for the legality of the COVID-19 mitigation efforts that kept our communities safe. We helped draft new regulations regarding open meetings laws now that in-person meetings were highly dangerous. We helped advise the state education department on new educational requirements and legal issues. We helped the Secretary of State run an election in which in-person voting was a potential superspreader event.
- I would be here all day if I were to list every single thing we did to keep the government running for the people during the pandemic. It is not hyperbolic, I think, to say that every single piece of our state's government had to be examined and potentially reconfigured for what is, God willing, a once-in-a-lifetime event.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- During the pandemic, Nevadans were scared and often confused as to whom they needed to turn for basic answers. Our **community engagement** was second to none during this time, and I know we have some of the most talented public-facing employees in the state.
- Our constituent services team was at the front lines of the pandemic. Nevadans called our office seeking help, and the members of the Constituent Services Unit, led by Adriana Smith, were there to answer.
- Between July 2020 and December 2021, our CSU members received 11,040 complaints and 30,277 inquiries. That's the level of work they were doing for our residents, many of whom were, in the early days, sequestered in their homes, worried about bills and health and their families.
- I want to say thank you to CSU for the work you did for these people and for the work you've done during my entire time as your attorney general.
- Our CSU, since my time in office, has received 51,744 complaints. I am especially proud of the work that CSU does because of their ability to work through challenging circumstances. For example, they resolved over 8,000 complaints last year even though our state was crippled by a cyberattack.
- I am proud to highlight the work done by our Office of Military Legal Assistance, led by Dawn Jensen, which has helped over 3,200 service members and veterans. In addition, this office maintains a monthly Ask-A-Lawyer event at the North Las Vegas Medical Center to provide free "no appointment necessary" legal consults.
- Our outreach work this past year has been on point, and we debuted new tools for the public to access our services in 2025 as well.

- We opened a new webpage in which Nevadans can report disruptions to their social security payments after chaotic and disruptive changes made by the current administration.
- Our Investigators were, as usual, extraordinarily active in the community, beginning with an event at the Mexican Consulate in which they discussed notario fraud, immigrant rights and our office hate crime hotline.
- Our MFCU continued their tradition of community activity including in education and training to the Nevada Pharmacy Board.
- Members of our office attended and staffed the Richard Steele Foundation Christmas Toy Giveaway last year, in which 150 children received toys and support over the holiday season.
- Of course, when it comes to community engagement, I must also thank my communications team – John Sadler and Alcinia Whiter – who write speeches that are the envy of attorneys general around the entire country. Or so I've been told.
- Every single one of you has done phenomenal work for our office, and we run a machine that we should all be extraordinarily proud of. I want to thank the:
 - Office Managers and Legal Secretaries for the remarkable support they provide to our 184 attorneys;
 - The Fiscal Division for their sound financial stewardship of the agency's 23 accounts;
 - The I.T. Division for maintaining our networks and fending off constant cyber security intrusions into our systems;
 - Our small but mighty Human Resources team for fostering a positive work environment and making all 400 plus employees feel seen and heard.
- I want to thank our General Counsel, Leslie Nino Piro, who ensures the AG's office operates in a transparent and ethical manner.
- Lastly, I would like to thank my boss, Teresa Benitez-Thompson, for the steady hand she brings to the office as my chief of staff.
- From a generational pandemic to cyberattacks and service outages; from brand new legal challenges to good old-fashioned criminal prosecutions, we have handled these years as a team.
- I hope that, in the years to come, you look back on the time you spent in this office with immense pride. You should feel that pride, because what you are doing matters so very much. You are ensuring that your community does not suffer; you are ensuring that your neighbors are not victims; you are ensuring that Nevada remains the great state that it is.

- I know I will feel that pride after I am out of this position, and it is because every day I was able to work alongside people I respect, I aspire to emulate, and I keep close to my heart. Thank you so much for being part of this journey with me, and while it is bittersweet, I am earnestly looking forward to our final year together.
- Thank you.