In 2025, U.S. criminal justice policy shifted considerably under President Trump, marked by expanded federal authority, Department of Justice restructuring, grant cancellations, and the deployment of the National Guard. Some states followed his enforcement-oriented approach while others stuck to their longstanding efforts to reduce incarceration and reform bail practices.

Meanwhile, the rate of reported violent crime, which spiked during the first years of the pandemic and began dropping in 2022, continued to fall through the first three quarters of the year and sparked deep disagreements about the reasons for the reduction. These actions and discussions have made 2025 a year of major political and structural change.

Leaders from the Council on Criminal Justice Centering Justice project and other experts discussed what the criminal justice field faced in 2025 and what we might expect in 2026.

Panelists

- Douglas Berman, Executive Director of the Drug Enforcement and Policy Center, The Ohio State University
- Shaila Dewan, National Correspondent, The New York Times
- Dave Sunday, Attorney General, State of Pennsylvania
- Khalil Cumberbatch (moderator), Director of Engagement and Partnerships, Council on Criminal Justice
- Marc Levin (moderator), Chief Policy Counsel, Council on Criminal Justice