

As state legislatures convene for 2026 sessions, the politics of crime and criminal justice are shifting under their feet, with an historically low homicide rate and federal law enforcement agents clashing with protesters in Minneapolis. Some states, like Iowa and Kentucky, are debating further crackdowns on repeat offenders while Utah is considering strategies to solve a greater share of serious crimes and Mississippi is tackling prison health care reform.

The Council on Criminal Justice Centering Justice project, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Future Caucus discussed the state legislative landscape for criminal justice in 2026 and prospects for policies that are based on solid evidence and can win bipartisan support.

## Panelists

- [Sarah Brown](#), Director, Civil and Criminal Justice, NCSL
- [Paige Ferguson](#), Senior Director, Policy Innovation Lab, Future Caucus
- [Kanani Souza](#), State Representative, R-Hawaii
- [Kadyn Wittman](#), State Representative, D-South Dakota
- [Khalil Cumberbatch](#), Director of Engagement and Partnerships, Council on Criminal Justice
- [Marc Levin](#), Chief Policy Counsel, Council on Criminal Justice