

CJI reviewed 2026 State of the Union and State of the State addresses and compared them with 2023–2025 speeches. Mentions of public safety initiatives, programs, or policy proposals were reviewed to identify trends. Links to sources are provided below.

Key Takeaways

- Few 2026 State of the Union and State of the State addresses included specific criminal justice plans.
- Only three states referenced public safety initiatives in 2026.
- Crime and safety were mentioned broadly, but proposals for policy or programmatic responses were largely absent.
- Voter research shows strong bipartisan support for federal investment in safety programs:
 - 79% support reinstating federal grants for community violence intervention programs, victim services, and youth outreach
 - 90% of likely voters approve federal funding for violence prevention and victim services (Alliance for Safety and Justice)

Systemic Context

- Justice systems face multiple pressures: rising incarceration, workforce shortages, aging facilities, shrinking budgets, and behavioral health challenges.
- Federal funding reductions further stress systems by limiting resources for evidence-based interventions, reentry supports, and opioid overdose prevention initiatives.

Evidence-Informed Solutions

- **Cross-agency coordination:** Police, courts, corrections, and social services collaborating for consistent outcomes.
- **Data-driven decision-making:** Measuring the impact of programs such as diversion, reentry, or targeted policing.
- **Targeted investment:** Funding interventions with proven results—behavioral health, education, workforce programs, structured reentry.
- **Consistent program implementation:** Ensures programs achieve intended outcomes over time.

- **Performance measurement:** Monitoring outcomes helps communities and policymakers understand what works.

Quote for Media

“When justice systems lack coordinated planning and evidence-informed strategies, the consequences ripple beyond courts and prisons. Public health systems absorb unmet behavioral needs. Employers face workforce barriers. Communities bear higher long-term costs.

States that invest in proven, data-driven approaches can change this trajectory to improve public safety, expand economic mobility, and build more resilient systems for the future.”

— Len Engel, Director of Policy and Campaigns, Crime and Justice Institute

Source / Attribution

- State of the State Addresses: [Stateside State of the State Recap 2026](#)
- 2026 Survey of Likely Voters: [Alliance for Safety and Justice](#)
- State of the Union Transcript: [AP News](#)

Spokesperson Bio

Len Engel, CJI Director of Policy & Campaigns

- Leads CJI’s work on evidence-informed strategies in criminal justice policy
- Expert in modern criminal justice policy, sustainable public safety solutions, and guiding complex legislative and policy processes
- Available for interviews to discuss trends, methodology, and system-level strategies

Transforming Justice Systems, Together

The Crime and Justice Institute bridges the gap between research and practice with data-driven solutions that drive bold, transformative improvements in adult and youth justice systems.

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