

U.S. Department of Justice

FY 2027 Performance Budget
Congressional Submission



Office of the Pardon Attorney

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I. Overview for the Office of the Pardon Attorney

For FY 2027, the Office of the Pardon Attorney (PARDON) requests \$16.5 million, 50 positions and 41 FTE, including 23 attorneys, to achieve its two Administration-priority missions. The first is to advise and assist the President in the exercise of the executive clemency power conferred on him by Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution. The second is developing and implementing the Department of Justice's firearm rights restoration initiative under 18 U.S.C. § 925(c) in support of the President's Executive Order 14206, protecting Second Amendment rights. This request supports a program increase of \$4.8 million, 18 positions, and 9 FTE, including 4 attorneys to support the Department's Firearm Rights Restoration Initiative. It includes \$2.0 million to support the development and maintenance of a new case management platform for both clemency and firearm rights restoration and \$1.5 million for contract personnel support to meet the missions' requirements.

The Firearm Rights Restoration Initiative will require significant human capital and contract support resources to launch and implement. Such a process was previously administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and has been defunct since 1992. The population of potentially eligible applicants is estimated to be over 25 million and given the length of time since a working process was in place, it is anticipated that there will be significant interest from the public in pursuing this remedy. The FY 2027 budget request is part of a multi-year strategic plan that will enable PARDON to meet its mission.

Clemency Mission

For over 130 years, the President has requested and received the assistance of the Attorney General and his/her designees in the Department of Justice in exercising the executive clemency function. Within the Department, PARDON is the component responsible for carrying out this function under the direction of the Deputy Attorney General. The long-standing role of Department officials in advising the President on clemency matters is reflected in various public record documents dating to the late 19th century. Moreover, since at least 1898, presidents have adopted advisory rules to describe their programs for processing clemency applications and their directions to the Attorney General in carrying out the Department's clemency advisory functions. The rules, which govern PARDON's work but do not bind the President, are approved by the President, and published by the Attorney General. The current version of the administrative rules was promulgated in October 1993 and amended in August and September 2000. They are published in 28 C.F.R. §§ 1.1 to 1.11.

The two principal forms of clemency sought by applicants are (1) pardon after completion of sentence and (2) commutation (reduction) of a sentence being served. The traditional standards by which clemency applications are evaluated in connection with the preparation of the Department's letters of advice (recommendations) to the President have been utilized for decades, and applications to seek these types of clemency are available on PARDON's website at <https://www.justice.gov/pardon>.

PARDON receives, evaluates, and investigates clemency applications and prepares the recommendation of the Department of Justice as to the appropriate disposition of each application for consideration by the President. In addition, PARDON responds to inquiries concerning executive clemency petitions and the clemency process from applicants, their legal representatives, members of the public, Members of Congress, and various Federal, State, and local officials and agencies; prepares all necessary documents to affect the President's decision to grant clemency; and notifies each clemency applicant of the President's decision concerning his or her clemency request. PARDON also provides general advice to the White House concerning executive clemency procedures and the historical background of clemency matters. Additionally, PARDON oversees special clemency initiatives that arise outside of the ordinary clemency process, such as those implemented pursuant to presidential proclamation.

Firearm Rights Restoration Mission

In FY 2025, the Attorney General directed PARDON to lead the Department's effort to develop an application process for restoring firearm rights to citizens. PARDON was directed to establish and administer an accessible application process to allow individuals with prior felony convictions and other disqualifiers to petition the Department for restoration of federal firearm rights pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 925(c).

The requested program increase in FY 2027 will allow PARDON to expand its efforts by acquiring additional human capital/personnel, an IT case management system and contract personnel support resources to establish a process for accepting and reviewing applications for the potentially millions of applicants seeking relief. Federal firearms rights restoration is a key part of the Department's commitment to protecting the Second Amendment rights of American citizens and PARDON will lead the Department's efforts to effectuate the President's agenda.

Internal and External Risks and Challenges

Significant increases in clemency applications and the addition of the firearm rights restoration initiative may create some risks and challenges to accomplishing PARDON's mission in FY 2027. Regarding the establishment of a firearms restoration process, PARDON notes that launching a new application process that could attract millions of applicants is a significant external risk to the Department, given that the Department has no foolproof method to reliably estimate the number of applications it can expect to receive. By identifying comparable application processes and referencing available information from the National Instant Criminal Background System, the government entity that provides firearms background checks, PARDON anticipates that applications could number into the hundreds of thousands in the first years of this process. Challenges stemming from this risk include identifying appropriate staff to hire, onboard, and train to investigate and evaluate applications; developing and establishing a sophisticated case management system to track the intake and processing of applications; maintaining appropriate security protocols and integration with current cybersecurity infrastructure to ensure safeguarding of the large quantities of private information submitted to PARDON by the public; coordinating and liaising with state and federal entities to acquire and

evaluate documentation necessary for the investigation of these applications process; setting up a customer service infrastructure to respond to applicant inquiries regarding the complex new application process; and initiating process efficiencies and improvements to maximize existing and to-be acquired human capital, technology, and customer service resources.

Regarding risks and challenges facing the clemency process, the Department notes that public interest in clemency has skyrocketed throughout the first year of this Administration, and there is an ongoing risk that the number of applications received in upcoming fiscal years will match or exceed the high number of recent submissions. After completing more than 14,000 cases, down from a then-historic high of 18,000 in FY 2022, PARDON started 2025 with a caseload of approximately 4,000. PARDON's clemency caseload increased significantly in 2025 during the same time as major staff attrition, resulting in a current caseload of over 19,000 pending applications as of March 2026. Reviewing and processing this backlog of cases will be a tremendous challenge until additional staff are hired and trained to support this work.

These internal and external factors may impact PARDON's ability to meet its mission requirements on its projected timeline.

Electronic copies of the Department of Justice's Congressional Budget Justifications and Capital Asset Plan and Business Case exhibits can be viewed or downloaded from the Internet using the Internet address: <https://www.justice.gov/doj/budget-and-performance>.

II. Summary of Program Changes

PARDON is requesting an enhancement of 18 positions and 9 FTE for a program increase of \$4.8 million in furtherance of its high priority initiative to develop, manage, and implement the Department of Justice's firearm rights restoration process under 18 U.S.C. § 925(c) in support of the President's Executive Order 14206 to protect Second Amendment rights.

Item Name	Description				Page
		Pos.	FTE	Dollars (\$000)	
Firearm Rights Restoration Initiative	Develop and implement a process for restoring firearm rights in support of the President's E.O. 14206 to protect Second Amendment Rights.	18	9	\$4,798	5

III. Appropriations Language and Analysis of Appropriations Language

General Legal Activities (GLA) language is displayed in the GLA rollup budget submission.

IV. Program Activity Justification

A. Office of the Pardon Attorney

<i>Office of the Pardon Attorney</i>	Direct Pos.	Estimate FTE	Amount
2025 Enacted	35	35	11,600
2026 Enacted	32	32	11,600
Adjustments to Base and Technical Adjustments	0	0	132
2027 Current Services	0	0	11,732
2027 Program Increases	18	9	4,798
2027 Program Offsets	0	0	0
2027 Request	50	41	16,530
Total Change 2026-2027	18	9	4,930

<i>Office of the Pardon Attorney-Information Technology Breakout</i>	Direct Pos.	Estimate FTE	Amount
2025 Enacted	1	1	195
2026 Enacted	1	1	197
Adjustments to Base and Technical Adjustments	0	0	0
2027 Current Services	1	1	197
2027 Program Increases	1	.5	2,043
2027 Program Offsets	0	0	0
2027 Request	2	1.5	2,240
Total Change 2026-2027	1	.5	2,043

Note: The \$2,043 includes \$2.0 million for an IT case management system and \$43,000 for the first year FTE for a new Information Technology position.

V. Program Increases by Item

Item Name: **Firearm Rights Restoration Initiative**

Budget Decision Unit(s): Office of the Pardon Attorney

Program Increase: Positions 18 Agt/Atty 4 FTE 9 Dollars \$4,798,000

The FY 2027 budget request for the Firearm Rights Restoration Initiative includes \$1.3 million for additional human capital/personnel resources to efficiently effectuate the priority initiative, which is expected to garner millions of applicants seeking relief in FY 2027. The 18 positions include program managers, attorney advisors, legal administrative specialists, information technology specialists, and additional support staff to successfully support the development, implementation, and execution of the firearm rights restoration initiative.

In FY 2026, PARDON seeks to continue to develop and enhance sophisticated case management software that leverages technological innovation and advanced capabilities to enable PARDON to enhance the processing and adjudication of the large number of applications we anticipate receiving in relation to this initiative and needed to effectuate and build up this initiative.

In anticipation of the ongoing obligation in FY 2027 to intake, process, and adjudicate large numbers of firearm restoration applications, the FY 2027 budget request includes \$2.0 million for continued IT case management maintenance, improvement, and expansion. The funding will also allow the case management system to be expanded into support of the clemency function, allowing for additional operational efficiencies in training, staffing, and workflow related to the interaction of PARDON's dual mission workstreams.

Given the FY 2027 request for additional personnel and expanded case management technology, current levels of contract support will be insufficient to meet the needs of the office. Additional personnel require additional administrative and IT support to sustain levels of productivity and output. Also, contract support is an essential facet of PARDON's strategic plan, as it fills in many essential gaps that are not achievable with full-time personnel. Contract support allows for maximum flexibility in the allocation of internal resources and can be culled or enhanced, nearly in real time, in response to fluctuations in application intake, presidential priority initiatives, and leadership priority assignments. The \$1.5 million request for contract support is commensurate with PARDON's expanded personnel request.

Specifically, the FY 2027 budget request includes both legal and administrative management support contractors to efficiently effectuate the priority initiative, which is expected to garner millions of applicants seeking relief in FY 2027. The funding will support a contract to address several needs of the office. Those include legal paraprofessional support, IT helpdesk, data analytics support, and administrative support.

Funding

1. Base Funding

FY 2025 Enacted				FY 2026 Enacted				FY 2027 Current Services			
Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount (\$000)	Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount (\$000)	Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount (\$000)
0	0	0	\$0	0	0	0	\$488	0	0	0	\$488

2. Personnel Increase Cost Summary

Type of Position/Series	FY 2027 Request (\$000)	Positions Requested	First Year Modular Cost per Position (\$000)	Full Year Modular Cost per Position (\$000)	Annualizations (\$000)			
					2 nd Year	3 rd Year	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
Supervisory Attorney Advisor: GS-15	\$132	1	\$132	\$263	\$266	\$273	\$134	\$7
Attorney Advisors: GS-13/14/15	\$297	3	\$99	\$191	\$609	\$711	\$312	\$102
Supervisory Program Manager: GS-15	\$234	2	\$117	\$232	\$484	\$490	\$250	\$6
Legal Administrative Specialists: GS-12/13	\$148	2	\$74	\$144	\$346	\$346	\$198	\$0
Legal Administrative Specialists: GS-7/9/11	\$264	6	\$44	\$86	\$636	\$726	\$372	\$90
Customer Service Representative: GS-9/11	\$53	1	\$53	\$103	\$125	\$125	\$72	\$0
Legal Assistant: GS-7/8	\$44	1	\$44	\$86	\$97	\$96	\$53	(\$1)
Info. Tech Specialist: GS-11/12/13	\$63	1	\$63	\$122	\$147	\$168	\$84	\$21
Management and Program Analyst/Budget: GS-11/12/13	\$63	1	\$63	\$122	\$147	\$168	\$84	\$21
Total Personnel	\$1,298	18			\$2,857	\$3,103	\$1,559	\$246

3. Non-Personnel Increase/Reduction Cost Summary

The FY 2027 budget request includes both legal and administrative management support contractors to efficiently effectuate the priority initiative, which is expected to garner millions of applicants seeking relief in FY 2027. The funding will support a contract to maintain several needs of the office. Those include:

Legal paraprofessional support: The Office will be tasked with expanded legal research and litigation preparation requirements, as well as priority projects to support both the clemency and firearms missions.

IT Helpdesk: Internal IT Helpdesk support is needed to provide real-time problem fixes to the anticipated larger number of personnel in the office. Their role is essential for minimizing non-productive downtime for PARDON staff and increasing responsiveness to the public and applicants.

Data Analytic support: Data analysts will be essential in establishing data reports and public reporting mechanisms in the new case management system. Public interest in both clemency and firearms projects cannot be understated, and accurate, responsive, and transparent data reports are essential to building and growing public trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of both processes.

Administrative support: Administrative and clerical support is essential to address the increased correspondence, intake, and public inquiries that PARDON anticipates will be present in FY 2026 and FY 2027.

Non-Personnel Item	FY 2027 Request (\$000)	Unit Cost (\$000)	Quantity	Annualizations (\$000)	
				FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
IT Case Management System	\$2,000	\$2,000	1	\$0	\$0
Legal and Administrative Management Personnel Contract Support	\$1,500	\$1,500	1	\$0	\$0
Total Non-Personnel	\$3,500	\$0	2	\$0	\$0

4. Justification for Non-Personnel Annualizations

Not Applicable.

5. Total Request for this Item

Category	Positions			Amount Requested (\$000)			Annualizations (\$000)	
	Count	Agt/Atty	FTE	Personnel	Non-Personnel	Total	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
Current Services	0	0	0	\$0	\$488	\$488		
Increases	18	4	9	\$1,298	\$3,500	\$4,798	\$1,559	\$246
Grand Total	18	4	9	\$1,298	\$3,988	\$5,286	\$1,559	\$246

6. Affected Crosscuts

Not Applicable.

VI. Program Offsets by Item

Not Applicable.

VII. EXHIBITS

Exhibit Templates are attached.