

## Community Report

## Western Washington



On October 6, 2025, I was sworn in as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington. It is an honor to lead an office of dedicated attorneys and professional staff who work every day to keep our communities safe, protect civil rights, defend government agencies in litigation, and work on crime prevention strategies.

The Trump Administration has emphasized combating violent crime through enforcing our immigration laws. My background as a prosecutor and Immigration Judge gives me unique insight on how criminal law and immigration enforcement are connected.

But immigration enforcement is only part of what we are doing. Our primary focus remains protecting our community from violent crime and the drug trafficking that often fuels such violence. In October, even in the midst of the government shutdown, [our teams worked with DEA to indict and arrest members of two large drug trafficking organizations.](#) These criminal gangs were bringing large amounts of fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin into our community. Those prosecutions continue into 2026.



Our work in other areas continues unabated: protecting children from predators on the Internet; pursuing those who commit financial frauds that target elderly and other vulnerable victims; going after violent crime and hate crimes and those involved in human trafficking.

While I joined the office in the last months of 2025, I am pleased to share this report of the good work performed by the attorneys and professional staff throughout the year.

Sincerely,



Charles Neil Floyd  
U.S. Attorney, Western District of Washington

### **Community safety**

Federal law enforcement works tirelessly to stem the flow of potentially deadly fentanyl into Western Washington. Our cases focus on trans-national organizations, violent drug traffickers, and those having a dramatic impact on our communities. In July, the Pierce County couple who led a drug trafficking organization connected to an Aryan prison gang were sentenced to federal prison. [Jesse James Bailey, 40, was sentenced to more than 17 years in prison.](#) In that investigation law enforcement seized nearly 2 million doses of fentanyl and more than 225 firearms. His wife, Candace, 43, was sentenced to five years in prison.

Other notable drug cases last year included the January sentencing of a Pierce County man who communicated with his customers and co-conspirators via social media. [Joel Adrian Valencia Rosas, 28, was sentenced to ten years in prison.](#) At right is one of the sophisticated concealed compartments installed in luxury vehicles to transport drugs.



bucket packed with potentially deadly fentanyl pills that was seized by agents.

In August, [law enforcement moved in on fifteen people associated with the Sinaloa Cartel.](#) The defendants used semi-trucks in some instances to transport their drugs. The drug ring was led by Rosario Abel “Joaquin” Camargo Banuelos, 31, and his brother Francisco “Fernando” Camargo Banuelos, 24. The men were based in the Sinaloa area of Mexico. At left is a

area of Mexico. At left is a



In May and June, close work with both the FBI and the Seattle Police Department resulted in the [takedown of two different drug distribution organizations that preyed on the homeless encampment known as “The Jungle” and on users in the International District.](#)



On May 29, 2025, law enforcement executed 16 search warrants in Federal Way, Vancouver, Everett, Pacific, Tukwila, Kent, Issaquah, Seattle, Woodlake, California, and Beaverton, Oregon. Investigators seized more than seven kilograms of cocaine, 18 kilograms of methamphetamine, more than 57,000 fentanyl pills, and 17 firearms. They also seized more than \$353,000 in cash.

Federal investigators also pursued individuals selling drugs on the dark web and manufacturing fentanyl pills in their own makeshift labs. One such case is that of an

Auburn man who had a pill press and four kilos of fentanyl powder at his garage drug lab.

[He was sentenced to eleven years in prison.](#)



### **Hate crimes**

Just last month, a [24-year-old man from Auburn pleaded guilty](#) for his racially motivated assault on a Black woman on a King County Metro bus. Adan C. Hernandez-Mayoral is scheduled for sentencing in front of Judge James L. Robart on March 17,



In September, [a 38-year-old Texas woman was sentenced to six years in prison](#) for the arson of a Snohomish County Church. Natasha Marie O'Dell burned the Seattle Laestadian Lutheran Church (SLLC) in August 2023. The building was a total loss.

The Everett man who used a pipe-bomb to blow up a Black couple's car [was sentenced in December to five years in prison.](#) Steven Goldstine, 55, even telephoned the victim's home and left a taunting voice message about the blast using a racial slur. Goldstine

was also sentenced for illegally possessing ammunition and earlier possessing a firearm that he pointed at protestors in Everett. A picture of the pipe-bomb he assembled is at right.



### **Child exploitation**

Sadly, it continues to be a busy time for those who investigate the sexual abuse of children – both via the Internet and in person. Significant prison sentences were handed down this year to a number of defendants, just a few of which are described here.

[A former Seattle resident was sentenced to 30 years in prison](#) for conspiring with a woman in Vietnam to kidnap two young girls and film them being sexually abused for his sexual gratification. A jury convicted Richard Stanley Maness, Jr., 38, following a three-day trial.

Snohomish County resident [Bennet Park, 43, was sentenced to nearly 22 years in prison](#) for his online sexual abuse of minors. Park was arrested with a young teen in his car whom he planned to molest. An analysis of Park's electronic devices led law enforcement to identify twenty-three minor victims. Park had coerced them into providing images of sexual abuse via Instagram, Discord, Snapchat, Facebook, Gmail, and Zoom platforms.

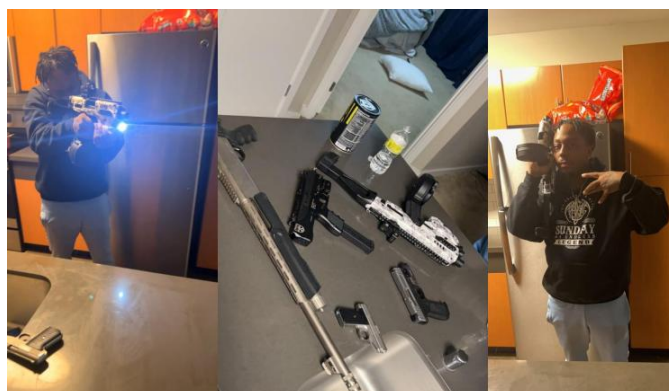
Also, [a 29-year-old registered sex offender who cut off his ankle monitor and molested young girls across Washington and into Oregon was sentenced to 17 years in prison](#). From February to April 2024, James "Jake" Harrison Newcomer sexually abused teens he met via various social media platforms. Newcomer posed as a teen-age boy and connected with various teen girls via social media such as Discord and Snapchat. He then arranged to meet them in person. In those meetings he gave girls drugs and alcohol and sexually assaulted them. The victims were from King, Kitsap, Snohomish, Lewis, Clark, Thurston, and Spokane Counties, as well as Woodburn, Oregon. The victims ranged in age from 12 to 16.

### **Human trafficking**

A California man [was sentenced in March to 15 years in prison for sex trafficking through force, fraud, and coercion](#). Winston Cornell Burt aka "Dice Capone," 32, of Hemet, [California](#), was arrested November 6, 2022, after he brutally assaulted a 20-year-old woman and engaged in a rolling gun battle as she fled in a van driven by a man who picked her up from the middle of Aurora Avenue in north Seattle. Burt self-identified as a "pimp" who led a sex trafficking enterprise through California, Arizona, and Washington. The young women were required to provide all the money they earned in prostitution to Burt. Three women had his name tattooed on their faces – a sign of "ownership."

In May, [a 35-year-old man who exploited women in Seattle, Portland, and Vancouver, Washington, as well as on the East Coast, was sentenced to 11 years in prison](#) for sex trafficking a minor. Dominique Terrel Gonzales preyed on women as well as young teens. Many of the victims met Gonzales through online dating apps. After he lured them in by promising a relationship, he coerced them into performing sex acts with strangers for his own financial gain.

Finally, in November, a prominent member of a Seattle street-gang was charged with sex trafficking, transportation for purpose of prostitution, and conspiracy to commit money laundering. [Leanthony Palmer, 34, is scheduled for trial in June 2026](#). At right, he is shown in images from a social media post about the firearms he illegally possessed. The Court detained Palmer pending trial after prosecutors argued that he posed a





danger to the community.

### **Aircraft assaults**

We continue to charge and prosecute cases of sexual assault on commercial aircraft. In February [Justin Baker, 42, was sentenced to two years in prison](#) for sexually assaulting a teen on a flight from Burbank, California, to Seattle. Also in February, [a 27-year-old Deering. Alaska man was charged](#) with abusive sexual contact for unwanted touching of a teen on a flight from Anchorage to Seattle. In March, [a 54-year-old Allen, Texas, man](#) who was flying from Chicago to Seattle was charged federally with abusive sexual contact.

### **Gun crimes and assaults**



A [Seattle man who used a homemade gun to carjack a luxury vehicle in Pioneer Square was sentenced to six years in prison.](#) Louis Montel De'Andre Dowers, 32, forced the driver out of his car and nearly ran over the driver's wife when she came out of a business near where the driver had parked. The homemade gun is pictured at left.

In June, two men who had been stealing and selling equipment from Joint Base Lewis McChord were arrested after they used a hammer to assault a servicemember who interrupted their theft from the Ranger compound.

In [December the men were indicted for the two-year theft scheme and for the brutal assault.](#) Trial is scheduled for February 24, 2026.



In November, [a Mexican national was indicted for the armed robberies](#) and attempted armed robberies of casinos and a Shoreline bank branch.



The surveillance photo at left shows the suspect using a handgun to rob the Silver Reef Casino on Lummi Tribal land near Bellingham. The defendant was ultimately arrested by Kent Police who recognized the various surveillance photos.

## **Financial Fraud**

Our Economic Crimes Unit had a busy year with major cases of embezzlement, financial adviser and attorney fraud, real estate scams, refund fraud, and trafficking in stolen goods. [Two men who made millions selling stolen goods online pleaded guilty in 2025](#) and will be sentenced in early 2026.

A former Washington State employee [was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison](#) for stealing nearly \$900,000 from state coffers. Matthew Randall Ping, 48, abused his access to credit cards and state payment systems to steal from the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH).



A [former Bellevue real estate broker was convicted in December](#) of defrauding investors in a scheme she committed with her ex-husband. Tamara King, 56, was convicted of eight counts of wire fraud, two counts of money laundering, and three counts of filing a false tax return after an eight-day jury trial. Twenty-two victims, most of whom were Seattle residents, invested \$2.25 million. King stole much of the money for her own expensive lifestyle – including the \$120,000 Tesla she is posing with at left. King is scheduled for sentencing in March 2026.

The operator of a call center that preyed on distressed homeowners was [sentenced to ten years in prison for defrauding nearly 900 distressed homeowners](#). Mohammed Zafaranchi, 43, was convicted following a week-long trial of all twelve federal charges he faced: conspiracy to commit wire fraud, five counts of wire fraud, five counts of money laundering, and obstruction of justice. The scheme stole nearly \$3 million from homeowners who believed the call center was going to help them refinance their mortgages to save their homes from foreclosure. Instead, many lost their homes and the \$3,000 they paid to Zafaranchi.

[Two brothers from India who made thousands of dollars selling and shipping fake cancer drugs to the U.S. were each sentenced in July to 30 months in prison](#). Avanish Kumar Jha, 39, and Rajnish Kumar Jha, 36, were arrested in Singapore on April 20, 2023, based on the 2022 indictment. At right is one of the contaminated vials of fake Keytruda. You can see black foreign matter in the vial.



Another Indian National was arrested while visiting Chicago for committing Medicare fraud here in Western Washington. [Mohammed Asif, 35, was sentenced in December to two years in prison](#) for the \$1,174,813 fraud. Asif conspired with others to operate a phony medical laboratory that billed for Covid tests that never occurred.



A financial advisor, an attorney, and a restaurateur all faced charges for stealing from those who trusted them. [Michael P. Raineri, 63, stole \\$531,411 from a client's trust account over about six years. He was sentenced in September to 32 months in prison.](#)

A former Tacoma attorney was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison for [stealing more than \\$500,000 from a disabled client](#) who had suffered a life altering brain injury in a motorcycle accident. And the [former owner of a Lake Sammamish restaurant pleaded guilty to stealing from a now-deceased elderly customer. Richard Dale Radcliffe, 62,](#) befriended the woman, promised to help her with her estate, and then stole \$515,000 from her financial accounts. He is scheduled for sentencing in February 2026.

## **Cybercrime**

Cybercrime and economic crime often go hand in hand. Our attorneys who specialize in cybercrime handled high profile hacking cases as well as crimes involving Bitcoin and fraudulent investment schemes with a significant online presence.

A former Army soldier [pleaded guilty in a far-ranging hacking and extortion case.](#) Sentencing for Cameron John Wagenius, 21, is scheduled for March.



Two men, from the small northern European country of Estonia were sentenced in August to 16 months in prison for a \$577 million fraud involving a Bitcoin related Ponzi scheme. [Sergei Potapenko and Ivan Turõgin, both 40, operated a purported cryptocurrency mining service called HashFlare,](#) which sold contracts promising customers a share of the profits generated from cryptocurrency mining. From 2015 to 2019,

HashFlare sales totaled more than \$577 million, relying on fake online dashboards that falsely reported mining activity and returns. HashFlare lacked the computing capacity to mine the vast majority of cryptocurrency it claimed to generate. Potapenko and Turõgin used investor funds to purchase jewelry, real estate, luxury vehicles, and to fund investment and cryptocurrency accounts for their personal use. Prosecutors moved quickly to seize assets including Bitcoin, real estate and jewelry. They seized 17 units in the building shown at right, and many items of luxury jewelry such as the pieces shown below.



Victims of this scam may get a good share of their money back.

**TIFFANY & CO.**

A [Mercer Island, Washington man was indicted](#) for laundering millions of dollars in connection with a fraud scheme that duped investors worldwide into sending money to reserve oil and gas storage. Even as 48-year-old Geoffrey K. Auyeung awaits trial in June 2026, [prosecutors have seized \\$7.1 million in cryptocurrency tied to the scheme.](#)



### **Crimes in Indian Country**

An important responsibility of the U.S.

Attorney's Office is to prosecute crimes in our tribal communities. Currently, the Office has two Assistant United States Attorneys working on these important cases.

In February, [a Puyallup tribal member was sentenced to 13 years in prison](#) for the shooting death of his friend on reservation land.

A [19-year-old member of the Makah tribe will be sentenced in late January 2026 for the knife assault of his intimate partner.](#) Peyton Blaise Watson pleaded guilty in October 2025.

Over the year, a number of cases from the Lummi Nation reservation were prosecuted: In April 36-year-old Lummi Tribal member Joseph Michael Quincy Jefferson was [sentenced to 51 months in prison](#) for a brutal strangulation assault on his intimate partner. [In July, a 48-year-old member of the Lummi Nation was indicted](#) for the May assault on an ex-partner.



Marc Cagey Oreiro is scheduled for trial in July 2026.

Finally, Lummi tribal member Joel Ridley, 38, is scheduled for trial in March 2026 on an indictment from April 2025, charging him with illegal firearms possession and two counts of violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. [Ridley allegedly shot two protected Bald Eagles on the Lummi reservations.](#)

### **Civil Division**

It was an extremely busy year for the attorneys and professional staff in of our Office tasked with defending U.S. government departments and federal action. Some 700 cases were opened in 2025 – about double those opened in 2024. These filings include medical malpractice, tort, immigration, employment, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and Administrative Procedures Act (APA) cases. This important work is critical for government operations.

The Financial Litigation Unit handles legal proceedings to enforce criminal fines, restitution orders, and civil judgments. In fiscal year 2025, the Office collected \$119.5 million in criminal debts, including a \$112 million payment from Binance Holdings Limited as part of its money laundering conviction, and \$9.74 million in civil debts.





In 2025, our civil division reached another milestone: after 13 years the Department of Justice agreed with the City of Seattle's move to end the consent decree designed to ensure constitutional policing by the Seattle Police Department (SPD). [On September 3, 2025, U.S. District Judge James L. Robart ended his judicial supervision of police reform,](#) noting the great strides SPD had made since the consent decree was put in place in 2012.

### **Ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Our civil rights team continues to work to ensure patients and their family members who are deaf or deaf blind receive critical interpreter services when seeking medical care. [This year, the Polyclinic, d/b/a Optum Care Washington, has resolved allegations one of its medical facilities failed on multiple occasions to provide sign language interpreter services for a patient who is deaf and blind,](#) in violation of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Polyclinic/Optum is making significant changes in how it provides interpreter services and is training staff on the new procedures. Polyclinic/Optum has created a \$350,000 fund to compensate other claimants who believe their rights to deaf or deaf/blind interpreter services were violated.



In 2025, we resolved an ADA complaint regarding 24-Hour Fitness, a nine-state exercise facility business. [The complainant was a member at the Vancouver, Washington, Mill Plain Boulevard, 24-Hour Fitness.](#) She complained that the accessible shower in the women's locker room had not been available for months. An investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office confirmed the accessible shower was unusable for several months due to ongoing repairs and maintenance. 24-HourFitness is training employees on the ADA policy and is compensating the complainant.

### **Affirmative Civil Enforcement (ACE)**

Attorneys and professional staff in our Civil Division continue to investigate violations of the False Claims Act – instances where government programs may have been cheated or paid out in error.

In December, [three companies settled allegations they wrongly obtained Paycheck Protection Program loans during the Covid pandemic.](#) The companies will pay back more than \$5.4 million in Small Business Administration loans and penalties. Two of the companies had too many employees to qualify for the loans, and the third company had operations connected to the cannabis industry that disqualified them from the loan program.

Back in March, [another company, Vix Technology, agreed to pay just over \\$2 million to resolve allegations that it did not qualify for a Paycheck Protection Program \(PPP\) loan.](#) In this case, the company also had too many employees to qualify for the assistance.

In January 2025, [a Bothell pharmaceutical company, Athira, agreed to pay just over \\$4 million to resolve allegations it used falsified academic research to obtain grants from the National Institute of Health \(NIH\).](#) The settlement resolves allegations that between January 1, 2016, and June 20, 2021, Athira failed to report allegations that its former CEO, Leen Kawas, falsified and manipulated scientific images in her doctoral dissertation and in published research papers that were referenced in several grant applications submitted to the NIH.

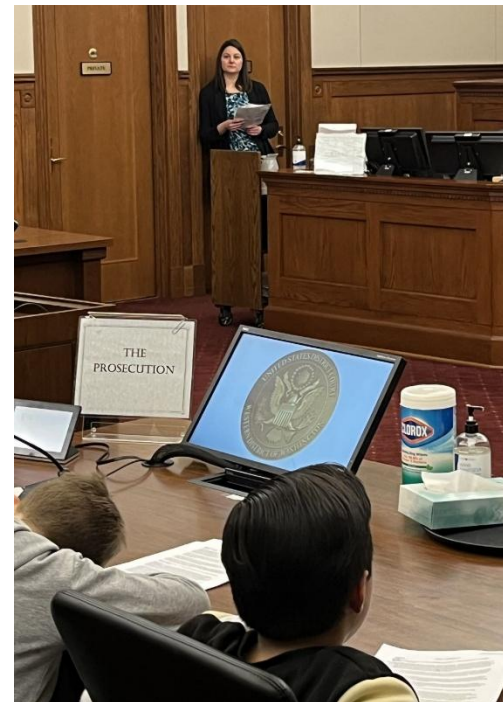


In June 2025, [the recipient of a grant from the National Science Foundation agreed to pay \\$155,000 to resolve allegations that he violated the terms of the grant by performing the research outside of the U.S.](#) Protein Engines, LLC, founded and operated by Joshua Salafsky PhD, was awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant in late 2021 for scientific research with pharmaceutical applications.

### **In the community**

Our attorneys serve on various committees with the state and federal bar associations. AUSA Zachary Dillon serves on the Washington State Bar Association ethics committee on behalf of the Office. The group writes opinions on the ethical obligations of lawyers. This year Zach helped author a piece on the ethical concerns of using artificial intelligence.

In 2025, volunteers from our office participated in numerous courthouse tours and presentations for student groups ranging from fifth graders through high school seniors. Dozens of volunteers from our office were vital to the success of two Constitution Day civics events at the Tacoma U.S. Courthouse in spring and fall of 2025. At right, fifth grade classes from Jennie Reed Elementary and Larchmont Elementary visit the courthouse to participate in a mock trial, meet some of the federal judges, tour the building, and learn more about the justice system.



High school students participate in a mock trial during 2025 Law Day. Many members of the U.S. Attorney's Office participate, talking about their law careers with these students.



Elder Fraud Coordinator Lauren Watts Staniar and FBI Special Agent Ethan Via speak regularly at senior centers and retirement homes about ways to avoid being a victim of the latest scams and frauds. This presentation was at Crossroads Community Center.



