



Hennepin County Sheriff's State Legislative Agenda 2026

Sheriff Dawanna Witt took office in January 2023 as the 29th Sheriff of Hennepin County. Sheriff Witt supports a broad set of priorities for public safety, accountability and reform in Minnesota this session including:

State Bonding for Forensic Science Building - \$5million Pre-Design

- Ensuring the residents of Hennepin County receive thorough, accurate, and unbiased forensic services in a timely manner is of utmost concern for over 40 jurisdictions who rely on the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Laboratory (HCSOFSL) for lab service.
- The volume and frequency of facility issues increase the risk of becoming noncompliant with these accreditation requirements which require action in the near term to safeguard this valuable asset, thereby necessitating a State Bonding Request.
- This request initiates critical pre-design resources to prioritize a project that processes a large share of the Twin Cities region's forensic evidence for investigations involving homicide, sexual assault, narcotics, firearms, DNA analysis, and more. After several years without sufficient funding at the local level, the Sheriff's Office requests \$5 million in state bonding funds to begin this project.

Jail Medication Statute Modification

- Support for clarification in state statute allowing licensed facility medical providers to assess and verify medication prescriptions when individuals enter custody.

Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness

- Focus on supporting public safety professionals through higher pay, pension adequacy, and professional development. Advocate for state-provided health care for all law enforcement officers and their families. Increase support for 911 Telecommunicators by passing the consensus workgroup recommendations for a new pension plan in 2026.
- Support access to child-care for first responders and incentives for centers who offer 24/7 care.
- Encourage reauthorization of the Intensive Comprehensive Peace Officer Education Training (ICPOET) to help agencies recruit and enhance opportunities for career advancement,

Technology Advancement, Enhancement, and Transparency

- Invest in cutting edge technology to help monitor heart rates for in-custody individuals with medical issues to provide immediate alerts to any irregularities.
- Ensure key law enforcement tools, like facial recognition software, also protect individual rights and require transparency in policy disclosure.
- Champion public safety aid money that will help counties, tribes, and municipalities address the unique needs of their individual communities, including digital forensics, crypto currency, drones, etc.



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Compassionate and Effective Community Safety Improvements

- Support the HOPE program, a successful jail programming approach that provides education, workforce training, life skills, and connections to resources to help inmates get back on their feet with the goal of reducing recidivism. Expand existing partnerships at the HOPE HUB with Hennepin County Community Corrections, Office of Workforce Development and Emerge Minnesota.
- Advocate to continue to provide outstanding medical care for inmates and ensure Minnesota requests a Medicaid 1115 Waiver so we can keep continuity of important medical coverage to those in our jail while they are in our custody.
- Continue necessary engagement and education around the Priority Admissions Task Force evaluating the 48 Hour Rule and possible future short and long term recommendations and solutions that protect public safety, improve jail access to appropriate medical services and expand state and local capacity.
- Lead efforts to address the Fentanyl Epidemic, including support for increased VCET Funding statewide to prevent overdoses and deaths.
- Invest in inmate family service navigators that help connect individuals and their families to treatment, resources, and opportunities as they transition out of county facilities.

Focus on Juvenile Interventions and Supports

- Invest in youth programs that are proven to steer kids away from crime and towards productive and safe choices.
- Provide leadership to ensure justice involved youth in Hennepin County have appropriate placement options and critically important services.