



Office of Attorney General
2023-25 Regular Budget Session
Policy Level - PD - Organized Retail Crime Task Force

Agency Recommendation Summary

The Attorney General’s Office (AGO) convened a statewide Organized Retail Crime Task Force (ORCTF). More than 100 individuals attended the first meeting on July 7, including representatives from state, local, and federal law enforcement, small and large businesses, and retail workers. At the meeting, law enforcement and others expressed a need for additional resources to investigate these sophisticated multijurisdictional crimes that involve groups of individuals stealing products in order to resell them for a profit. At least nine state legislatures have made similar investments into organized retail crime task forces, including California. These investments will help workers and Washington’s economy.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Staffing						
FTEs	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,510	\$1,510	\$3,020	\$1,510	\$1,510	\$3,020
Total Expenditures	\$1,510	\$1,510	\$3,020	\$1,510	\$1,510	\$3,020

Decision Package Description

An analysis from the Retail Industry Leaders Association estimates Washington retailers lost \$2.7 billion to organized retail crime in 2021. Federal crime statistics show that the value of items stolen from Washington retailers increased by 151 percent from 2019 to 2020. Organized retail crime differs from burglary and larceny — such as shoplifting — in that it is not the result of a single individual breaking the law, but rather part of an organized scheme to defraud retailers or to steal products for resale elsewhere. Organized crime can result in intimidation and violence for employees in those stores. On June 28, the New York Times reported that assaults in retail stores are increasing, and pointed to theft as one of the causes.

Moreover, organized retail crime harms consumer who may inadvertently buy stolen goods on the online marketplace. Even before the recent, well-publicized national shortage, baby formula was one of the most-stolen items from stores, according to the 2020 National Retail Foundation Organized Retail Crime survey. The stolen formula then can appear for sale on online marketplaces. Parents who buy stolen formula on the secondary market may be putting their babies at significant risk if the thieves failed to store it at the appropriate temperature. Additionally, thieves may have manipulated the packaging, such as changing expiration dates.

This request is similar to recent investments in other states. For example:

- In 2022, Governor Newsom proposed, and the California Legislature approved the following investment to “expand and make permanent” California’s Organized Retail Crime Task Force (ORCTF): \$6 million General Fund annually in Fiscal Years (FY) 2024 and 2025, and increasing to \$10.5 million in FY 2026, and \$15 million in FY 2027.
- On June 28, the Arizona Legislature transmitted its budget to the Governor, including a \$1.5 million annual appropriation for FY 2022 and 2023. The funding provides for “operational expenses of the organized retail task force and for hiring one attorney, one paralegal, two investigators and one support staff person within the office of the attorney general and four peace officers who are assigned to the task force to focus specifically on investigating and prosecuting organized retail crime.”
- On July 20, Governor Whitmer signed [a budget](#) that includes a \$3.5 million appropriation for the Michigan Attorney General to hire 6.5 FTE for an Organized Retail Crime Task Force.

The Washington law enforcement agencies have limited resources to tackle this problem. Acting Seattle Police Department Chief Adrian Diaz attended the first the ORCTF meeting and expressed a challenge echoed by other law enforcement leaders and officers during the meeting – his agency is down more than 400 officers, making it a challenge to invest appropriate resources into these cases.

A modest investment in a centralized statewide ORCTF will deter and prevent crimes that harm Washington’s vulnerable retail workers, harm consumers, and cause significant economic harm to our state.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

This is a request to create a new program and task force, an ORCTF in Washington State.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) requests \$3,020,000 in the 2023-25 biennium to cover costs related to the creation of ORCTF.

The AGO Agency Assumptions:

Agency administration support FTE are included in the tables, for every one Assistant Attorney General (AAG) FTE, the AGO includes a 0.5 Legal Assistant 3 (LA 3) FTE and a 0.3 Management Analyst 5 (MA 5) FTE. The MA 5 is used as a representative classification.

Total workload impact in this request includes standard assumption costs for good & services, travel, and capital outlays for all FTE identified.

Below are the AGO's Criminal Justice Division (CRJ) and administration support total FTE assumptions (Seattle rate).

- FY2024: 2.0 AAG, 1.0 LA 3, 2.0 Paralegal 2 (PL 2), 4.0 Investigator (INV), 1.0 Data Consultant 4 (DC 4), and 0.5 MA 5, and each FY thereafter.

Workforce Assumptions:

See graphic

FTE	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	Ongoing ? Y / N
AAG FTE	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	Y
Object A & B	320,000	320,000	320,000	320,000	
LA FTE	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	Y
Object A & B	96,000	96,000	96,000	96,000	
PL FTE	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	Y
Object A & B	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000	
INV FTE	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	Y
Object A & B	521,000	521,000	521,000	521,000	
MA5 FTE	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	Y
Object A & B	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000	
DC4 FTE	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	Y
Object A & B	110,000	110,000	110,000	110,000	
TOTAL FTE	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	
TOTAL A & B	1,313,000	1,313,000	1,313,000	1,313,000	

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Results Washington Outcome Measures:

This budget request will support the Governor’s Results Washington priorities of “Healthy and Safety Communities” and “Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government.”

AGO Strategic Plan:

This request supports Goals 1, 2, and 3 of the AGO’s Priority to “Protect the People”:

Goal 1 – Defend the civil rights and stand up for vulnerable Washingtonians.

Goal 2 – Protect Washington’s environment and public health.

Goal 3 – Promote Good Government

Good government requires clear understanding of the roles and authorities of the executive branch agencies as well as protection of taxpayer resources.

Activity	Fund	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027
A0003 - Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions	001-1	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000
TOTAL		1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000

Performance Measure	Fund	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027
2536 - Criminal Cases Closed	001-1	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000
TOTAL		1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000	1,510,000

Performance Measures	Incremental Changes 2024	Incremental Changes 2025	Incremental Changes 2026	Incremental Changes 2027
002533 - Total AG Formal and Informal Opinions Issued	0	0	0	0

Performance Outcomes:

Incremental impacts for this Performance Measure is indeterminate.

Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

Local law enforcement and prosecutors are often required to focus resources on violent crimes at the expense of investigation and prosecution of property crimes such as organized retail theft. Additional resources for AGO investigation and prosecution of these crimes can address some of these gaps.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

N/A.

Target Populations or Communities:

The proposal promotes equity in part because communities of color are heavily impacted by organized retail crime in the Puget Sound Region. For example, the Korean American Grocers Association and business owners in the International District are supportive of the Task Force. They report that their neighborhoods have been the target of organized crime rings, resulting in economic loss and growing concern for employee and customer safety. Small businesses often lack the resources to hire loss prevention teams.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A.

State Workforce Impacts:

N/A.

Intergovernmental:

N/A.

Stakeholder Response:

There is no known opposition to this request at this time.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A.

Changes from Current Law:

No changes in existing statutes, rules, or contracts is necessary for this supplemental funding request.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

N/A.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Obj. A	\$990	\$990	\$1,980	\$990	\$990	\$1,980
Obj. B	\$323	\$323	\$646	\$323	\$323	\$646
Obj. E	\$185	\$185	\$370	\$185	\$185	\$370
Obj. G	\$12	\$12	\$24	\$12	\$12	\$24

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