



What a year. In 2018, our Mayor finished her first full year in office with several notable accomplishments and our City Council has continued to advance innovative policies to meet today's challenges. So far in 2019, the city continues to hum ahead, even as we've entered the era of the "[Seattle Squeeze](#)."

At the City Attorney's Office, our Civil Division serves as the City's law firm, providing legal advice and legal defense for City departments and our local elected officials. The team has ably fielded legal challenges that cross the spectrum in 2018, from [Mandatory Housing Affordability](#), to [data transparency](#) for rideshare companies, to expanding [rental housing access](#) for people with criminal records.

Our Criminal Division handles Seattle's misdemeanor prosecutions. In 2018, we expanded alternatives to traditional prosecution, like [LEAD](#) and [Pre-Filing Diversion](#), which are showing promising results so far. Our Review & Filing Unit fielded thousands of police reports with Assault, DUI, Criminal Trespass and Theft being the most frequently charged offenses. Our Domestic Violence Unit has continued to take on many challenging cases, and the Court has begun using a new research-informed post-conviction batterers treatment program.

2018 has been a busy year, and 2019 shows no signs of slowing down. Keep reading for some updates and a preview of what awaits in the year ahead...

Pete Holmes
Seattle City Attorney

Vacating Marijuana Possession Convictions



Pete joined with Mayor Durkan to ask the Seattle Municipal Court to vacate the convictions of [542 people convicted of simple marijuana possession](#) in Seattle from 1996-2010 (when Pete stopped charging for that offense).

“As we see marijuana sold in retail storefronts today, people who simply had a joint in their pocket a decade ago still have a red mark on their records. This motion was one small step to right the injustices of a drug war that has primarily targeted people of color.” - Pete Holmes

All seven judges signed an [Order](#) that set the process to vacate all 542 convictions (providing defendants an opportunity to object). Per the Order: "Inasmuch as the conduct for which the defendant was convicted is no longer criminal, setting aside the conviction and dismissing the case serves the interests of justice."

Cases of Interest



2019 at the State Supreme Court & Federal District Court

We'll have some significant cases at the Washington State Supreme Court in 2019. The state's high court has agreed to hear challenges to both Seattle's local election [Democracy Voucher program](#) and the [First in Time rental housing law](#) meant to support tenant applicants. We await the Court's decision whether to hear our appeal regarding the [Hotel Employees Health and Safety Initiative](#) (Seattle Initiative 124) which was struck down by the Court of Appeals on Christmas Eve.

In the Federal District Courts, we're awaiting a ruling on the City's [Fair Chance Housing ordinance](#), which prevents landlords from denying applicants housing based on criminal history. Our multi-jurisdiction coalition [recently won](#) our challenge against the Trump Administration for their intention to add a [Citizenship Status question](#) on the 2020 U.S. Census. Now we'll see what happens on appeal...



Tenant Move-In Fees

The City [prevailed](#) in the King County Superior Court, where we defended the recently-approved law that caps [move-in fees](#) and allows tenants to pay their security deposits, fees and last month's rent over successive installments. This law is meant to aid renters in accessing apartments that might otherwise be out of reach.

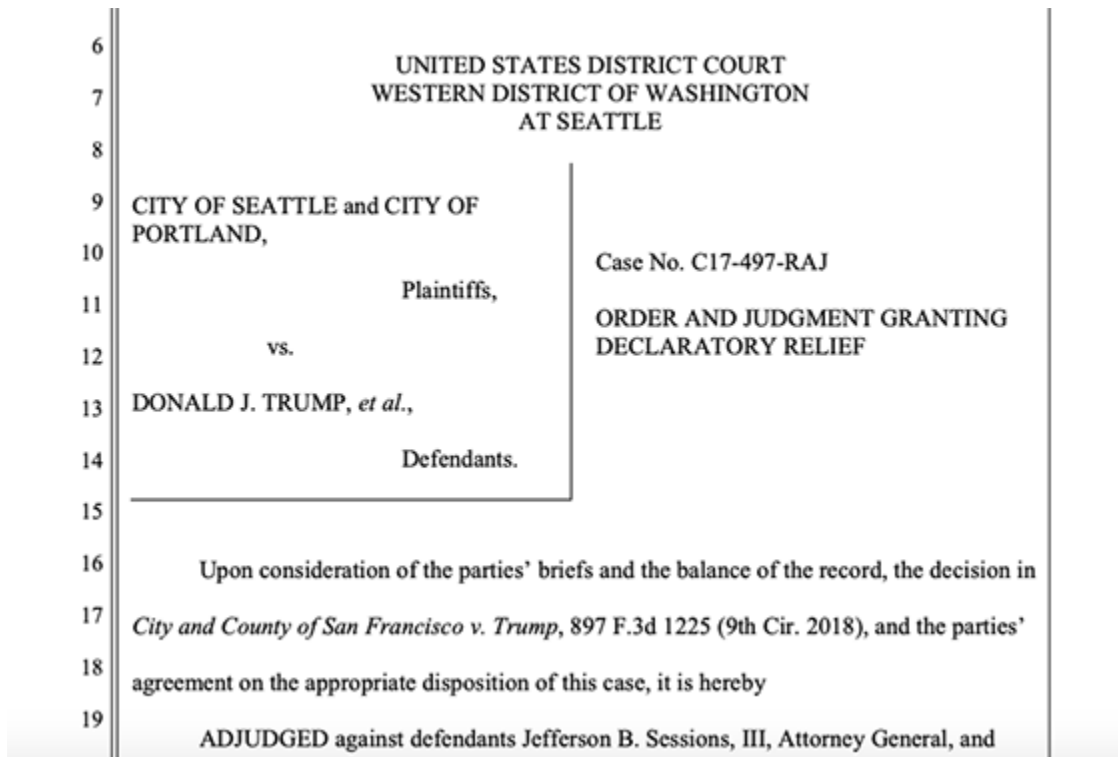
The Rental Housing Association has dropped its appeal, meaning this is now settled law.



Safe Storage of Firearms

Pete partnered with Mayor Durkan and Councilmember González in advancing legislation to require that [firearms be safely stored](#) when not in a person's possession, which limits firearm access to children, vulnerable people, and thieves. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and other plaintiffs challenged the law.

King County Superior Court recently [found](#) the plaintiffs did not have standing and that the issue was not yet ripe for consideration. The groups have appealed the decision, and the law is set to take effect next month.



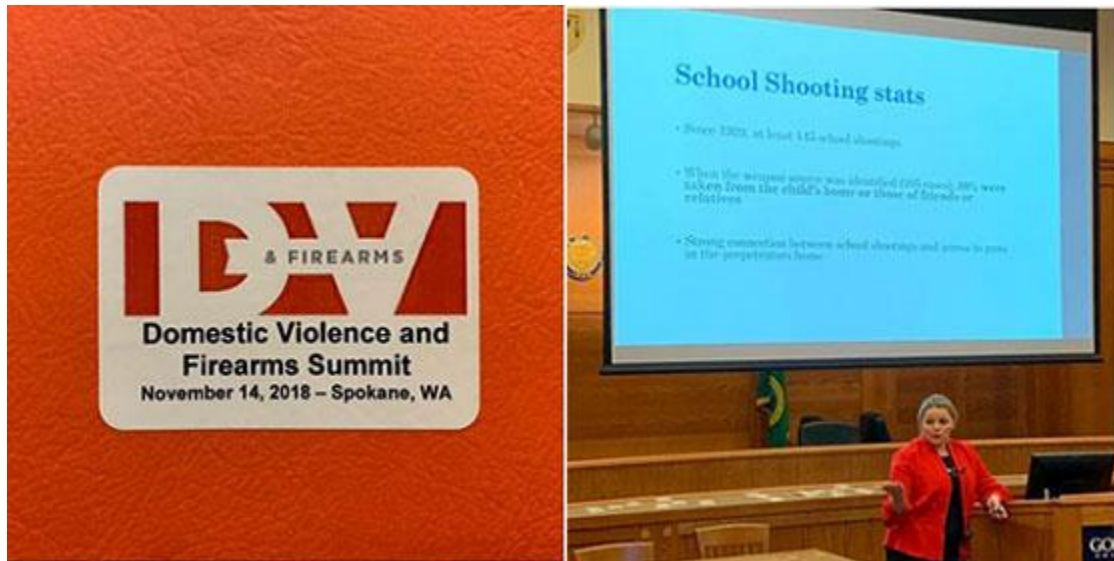
Seattle Prevails in Sanctuary Cities Lawsuit vs. Trump Administration

The City has prevailed in its lawsuit against the Trump Administration after their attempt to withhold Congressionally-appropriated funds from Seattle in retaliation for policies that support and welcome immigrant and refugee communities.

Their attempt was [found unconstitutional](#), and the City has since [received](#) the withheld funds for three Crime Prevention Coordinators in the Seattle Police Department.

“With our public safety grant dollars now in-hand, we can move forward in supporting our neighbors and furthering community safety in Seattle.” - Pete Holmes

Regional DV Firearms Enforcement Unit



Regional DV Firearms Enforcement Unit - Spreading the Word

In 2018, the Regional Domestic Violence Firearms Enforcement Unit recovered 466 firearms from people issued Surrender Orders, which is nearly *four times* as many guns surrendered in 2016.

The [program](#) has become nationally recognized as an effective model for implementation of firearm surrender laws and became fully operational in 2018. Team members recently shared lessons learned from our implementation efforts at the Alliance for Gun Responsibility's *DV & Firearms Summit* in Spokane.

Pete Holmes and Chris Anderson (CAO's Domestic Violence Unit Supervisor) also traveled to New York to meet with the *Everytown for Gun Safety* implementation team to discuss the development of similar programs in Philadelphia and Rhode Island.

Quashing Old Warrants



Pete joined with Mayor Durkan, Chief Carmen Best & Councilmember González to advance a motion to [quash over 200 low-level nonviolent misdemeanor warrants](#) that are 5 or more years old. The CAO's Criminal Division Chief, Kelly Harris, worked to identify appropriate cases for the Seattle Municipal Court judges to consider -- mostly people charged or convicted of Driving with a Suspended License in the 3rd Degree ("driving while poor") and for Prostitution. None of the people with warrants have been caught re-offending in the time since, in that their record would have flagged their outstanding warrants had they come into contact with law enforcement. The sole authority whether to grant or deny the motion lies with the Seattle Municipal Court judges.

"If you haven't re-offended after 5-plus years of a warrant being issued for a low-level offense, I'm comfortable asking the Court to dismiss your warrant. Public safety is well-served in this action, as this clears the field to allow officers to focus on finding those people who've committed more serious offenses." - Pete

Photo courtesy [@MayorJenny's](#) twitter account.

Notable News Clips



[Program chooses diversion over immersion in the justice system](#) Real Change

[Gun seizure team works to stop next school shooting](#) KING TV

[Seattle officials work to help young adults avoid criminal records](#) Q13 TV

[Not just pot cases – Seattle tries to lift 'colossal' burdens of low-level convictions](#) KUOW



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