

New Mexico Counties 2024 Legislative Priorities



Detention Reimbursement Fund

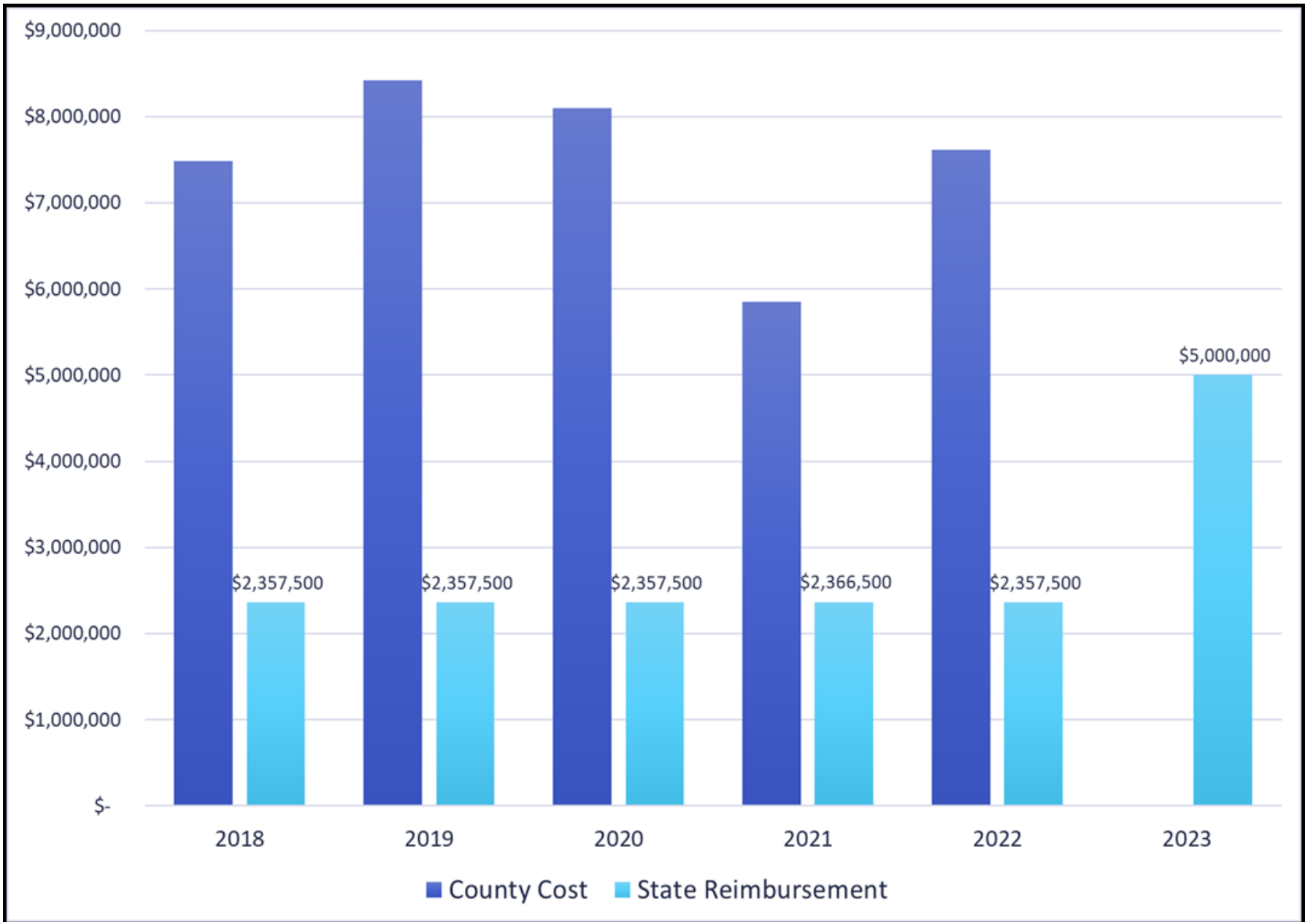
Appropriate \$7.5 million for the County Detention Facility Reimbursement Fund, (NMSA 1978 §33-3B-4), to reimburse counties a percentage of the cost for housing felony offenders who have been sentenced to confinement in state correctional facilities, in county facilities.

The County Detention Reimbursement Fund was created in 2007 with a \$5 million appropriation following litigation between the counties and state.

It diminished to less than \$2.5 million over the next decade.

The Legislature restored it to the 2007 amount of \$5 million in 2022 but the five-year average cost to house New Mexico Corrections Department inmates has been calculated by the New Mexico Sentencing Commission to be \$7.5 million.





Detention Recruitment & Retention

New Mexico Counties requests an appropriation of \$10 million for the Detention and Corrections Workforce Capacity Building Fund established by the legislature in 2023 (NMSA 1978 §9-6-19).

The Fund was created to assist counties with critical detention officer vacancy levels in county facilities notwithstanding significant pay increases, to attract and retain employees.

County Facility	# of Staff	# Staff Vacancy	% Staff Vacancy
Colfax	30	6	20.00%
De Baca	10	2	20.00%
Sandoval	55	11	20.00%
Doña Ana	219	47	21.46%
McKinley	50	12	24.00%
Curry	64	18	28.13%
Valencia	45	13	28.89%
Santa Fe	64	20	31.25%
Taos	27	9	33.33%
San Juan	95	33	34.74%
Eddy	115	44	38.26%
Otero	62	26	41.94%
Rio Arriba	31	13	41.94%
Quay	22	10	45.45%
Chaves	64	30	46.88%
Bernalillo	411	197	47.93%
Bernalillo (Juvenile)	96	66	68.75%

Prisoner Transport & Extradition

Create a line item in the New Mexico Department of Finance & Administration budget with \$750,000 to reimburse counties that provide transportation for state prisoners.

- Statute 4-44-18C NMSA requires the state to make such payment.
- Counties should not be responsible to pay for state prisoner extradition.
- Has never been funded even though it is authorized.



RISE Program

New Mexico Counties requests that the Legislature continue and increase funding for the Reach, Intervene, Support and Engage (RISE) Program in the Human Services Department Behavioral Health Services Division budget.

RISE is a partnership between the state and selected counties to provide behavioral health, MAT, housing, vocational and other services to people in detention.

RISE is being implemented in Bernalillo (through UNM), Colfax (through Krossroads Integrative Health and Recovery Solutions), Doña Ana, Eddy (through Lifehouse Inc.), Grant, Lincoln, Luna, Roosevelt, San Juan, Sierra, Socorro, and Valencia counties. San Miguel and Curry counties were awarded planning grants for RISE programming.

An increase in funding would provide sustainability and enable expansion of this very successful program.

Firefighter & EMS Recruitment & Retention

Appropriate funds to assist local governments with critical needs for career and volunteer firefighter and emergency services staffing, recruitment, and retention.

County Fire Districts	
Career Departments	Volunteer Departments
25	242

- Rural communities rely heavily on volunteer members
- SFMO data reflects a 17% decrease in volunteers since the pandemic
- In many counties, paid staff is limited to one or two individuals
- Call volume statewide has increased by as much as 50%
- Many response systems are overburdened
- Currently, 19 fire and emergency response districts are at risk of being shut down because they do not meet the response requirements necessary to serve their communities.
- These dramatic changes necessitate additional funding for recruitment and retention efforts for volunteers, as well as long-term solutions to help local governments add additional paid staff positions.

Emergency Medical Services

Appropriate \$10 million to the Department of Health Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Bureau to assist local governments with EMS services.

Emergency medical services in New Mexico have been significantly underfunded for years and although local governments have assumed responsibility for providing these services, they are not statutorily required to do so.

The current state appropriation has dropped to \$2.8 million, less than what was allocated in the mid-1990s.

Taxes collected through local GRT increments, and other sources of revenue do not provide sufficient support to local governments to meet community needs, especially in rural areas of the state where county services are often the only response available.

A more sustainable shared revenue should be identified.



Courthouse Funding

State district courts no longer reflect a single judge residing at a county facility the way the territorial statute first intended.

State district courthouse construction can reach well over \$50 million and the addition of a single judge can cost a county \$2-\$3 million for renovation and increased operational support.

Counties maintain that district courthouses are a state responsibility and that the rising costs of construction, security, and IT necessitate a shared revenue stream.



Courthouse Funding

In 2023, the Legislature appropriated \$23 million to the Administrative Office of the Courts to assist with these critical needs.

\$15 million was designated to resolve litigation between the 8th Judicial District Court and Otero County and the remaining balance is being distributed based on needs statewide.

The Administrative Office of the Courts requested applications for the remaining \$8 million and received an additional \$22 million in requests.

The legislature should continue to provide an appropriation to ensure appropriate funding for construction, renovation, and other needs of state district courthouses.



Elected Official Salary Caps

New Mexico Counties requests that the Legislature increase the salary cap for newly elected officials by 15% with a provision for future adjustments to track the Consumer Price Index.

County elected officials' salaries are capped by NMSA 1978 §4-44-4. HB410 passed unanimously during the 2023 legislative session but was vetoed. An increase is imperative this year as it would affect any incoming elected officials who take office in January 2025.

Counties have historically received an increase to the salary cap every four years. The cap was last amended in 2018 and currently 14 counties are at the cap.

In several counties, the chief deputy official or undersheriff make significantly more than the elected official. A CPI provision would eliminate, or greatly reduce, the need for repeated legislative action.

Bernalillo
Chaves
Cibola
Dona Ana
Guadalupe
Lea
Luna
McKinley
Rio Arriba
San Juan
San Miguel
Sandoval
Santa Fe
Valencia

Thank You

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