NEW MEXICO DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S STATEWIDE PRIORITIES

Intro — New Mexico's District Attorneys have historically presented their budget requests individually because each judicial district differs in population, geography, caseload and staffing requirements. After years of addressing these challenges district by district, however, the District Attorneys increasingly recognize that several of their most significant problems are shared statewide issues that require a collective response.

Through the New Mexico District Attorney Association (NMDAA), the state's fourteen elected District Attorneys are joining together to identify three common priorities: **1) maintaining sufficient prosecutorial capacity through competitive compensation; 2) appropriately compensating elected District Attorneys; and, 3) modernizing statewide prosecutorial technology.** Although these problems manifest differently in rural and urban districts, they affect every office's ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel, manage demanding caseloads and effectively perform their essential role in New Mexico's public-safety system.

Each DA will continue to identify the funding necessary for the specific needs of that district. This collective request asks the Legislature to recognize that the underlying challenges are statewide priorities requiring sustained statewide investment.

1. RECRUIT AND RETAIN THE WORKFORCE NEEDED TO PROSECUTE NEW MEXICO'S CASES

The central workforce problem is not simply the number of funded positions vacant at a particular time. It is maintaining enough qualified and experienced prosecutors and professional staff to manage the volume and complexity of cases referred to DA offices.

LFC's statewide review found that 13 of 15 surveyed prosecutorial offices reported insufficient prosecutors. Average attorney turnover was 31 percent in FY24, including 54 percent among Assistant Trial Attorneys and 43 percent among Trial Attorneys. Location and limited applicant pools were the leading recruitment barriers identified by DA offices, followed closely by salary.

At the same time, cases referred to prosecutors increased from 61,892 in FY24 to 66,831 in FY25, while average cases added per attorney increased from approximately 92 to 101. Rural offices face particularly limited applicant pools and geographic recruitment challenges, while larger offices confront greater case volumes, specialized prosecutions and significant turnover.

NMDAA has already undertaken a systematic compensation analysis using the Hay Guide-Chart Profile Method and comparisons with executive and judicial salary grades. NMDAA has approved a new salary schedule and is in the process of getting it approved by DFA. The Legislature has not approved funding for NMDAA-approved pay raises, but LFC continues to identify prosecutor recruitment and retention as a persistent concern. Without an increase in funding, recruitment and retention will remain a persistent concern.

DA offices have some flexibility to use vacancy savings for personnel needs, but those savings fluctuate as positions are filled and cannot sustainably finance competitive recurring compensation while preserving the staffing capacity necessary to manage caseloads.

Collective Priority 1: Provide sufficient recurring funding for each DA office to recruit qualified attorneys and professional staff, retain experienced personnel, fill critical positions and maintain competitive compensation.

2. ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION FOR ELECTED DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

Compensation for New Mexico's elected District Attorneys has not kept pace with comparable senior positions within the justice system. LFC reported DA compensation at approximately $160,000 in July 2025. By comparison, FY26 compensation is approximately $224,868 for a District Judge and $236,706 for a Court of Appeals Judge.

The proposed $225,000 DA salary has an established policy basis. In 2024, HB 204 proposed setting DA compensation at 95 percent of a Court of Appeals Judge's salary. Applying that benchmark to current judicial compensation produces approximately $224,871—essentially the proposed $225,000 salary.

District Attorneys are independently elected officials responsible for prosecutorial decisions and the management of public agencies, personnel, budgets, litigation, victim services and substantial criminal caseloads. Compensation near the District Judge level would restore a rational relationship between DA compensation and comparable senior positions within New Mexico's justice system.

Collective Priority 2: Establish elected District Attorney compensation at approximately $225,000 annually, either directly or through a permanent benchmark tied to judicial compensation. Using LFC's $160,000 July 2025 salary figure and the subsequent 1-percent FY27 adjustment as an estimated baseline, the salary-only cost of increasing all fourteen DAs to $225,000 is approximately $887,600 annually.

3. MODERNIZE STATEWIDE PROSECUTORIAL TECHNOLOGY

AODA advised LFC in 2025 that nearly all hardware, software, servers and case-management infrastructure supporting prosecutorial systems were at end-of-life. AODA reported that only eight IT employees supported statewide operations and identified significant cybersecurity, network, licensing and infrastructure needs. Most importantly, AODA advised LFC that a full rebuild is necessary to keep the state's prosecutorial data systems functional and secure.

This infrastructure supports all fourteen elected District Attorneys and interfaces with other criminal-justice agencies while maintaining sensitive criminal, juvenile and expunged-case information. Although the Legislature has begun providing additional technology funding, the documented need extends beyond hardware replacement to statewide case-management, cybersecurity and technology infrastructure.

Collective Priority 3: Fund a coordinated, multiyear modernization of statewide prosecutorial case-management and office technology, cybersecurity, hardware, networks and IT support.

A COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC SAFETY — For FY27, DA offices collectively requested a $19.1 million increase in General Fund support for compensation, personnel, technology and other operating requirements. The Legislature provided additional resources, including NMDAA-approved pay raises and selected staffing and technology investments, but the underlying workforce and infrastructure challenges remain.

The District Attorneys are now presenting these priorities collectively because experience across New Mexico demonstrates that workforce capacity, elected-DA compensation and prosecutorial technology are not isolated district problems—they are statewide system needs. Competitive compensation strengthens recruitment and retention. Sufficient staffing provides capacity to manage demanding caseloads. Modern technology allows prosecutors to manage cases, evidence and sensitive information securely and efficiently.