

Public Safety: Tribal and State Current Status and Opportunities

Lessons Learned from Public Safety Roundtables and Town Halls

Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta, District 69
Sen. Angel Charley, District 30

August 27, 2026

Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee

Why This Matters

- School Safety
- Family Safety (e.g., substance use disorder)
- Emergency Response (e.g., domestic violence)
- Community Trust

Stories from To'hajiilee

Navajo police shooting leaves suspect dead



Updated: 9:27 PM MST Jan 7, 2026 | Editorial Standards



Nick Catlin
Digital Editor

TOHAJIILEE, N.M. — A federal investigation is underway after a Navajo Police Department fatal shooting during a shelter-in-place.

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CRIME

Suspect in To'Hajiilee shooting that injured Navajo Nation officers faces federal charges

by: Micaela DePauli
Posted: Mar 16, 2026 / 07:21 PM MDT
Updated: Mar 17, 2026 / 03:34 PM MDT

Suspect in To'Hajiilee shooting that injured Navajo Nation officers faces federal charges

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[TOHAJIILEE, N.M.](#) (KRQE) – New details have been released about a shooting that left two Navajo

NEW MEXICO LIVING >

Person charged after forcing UPS driver to lead police on a chase

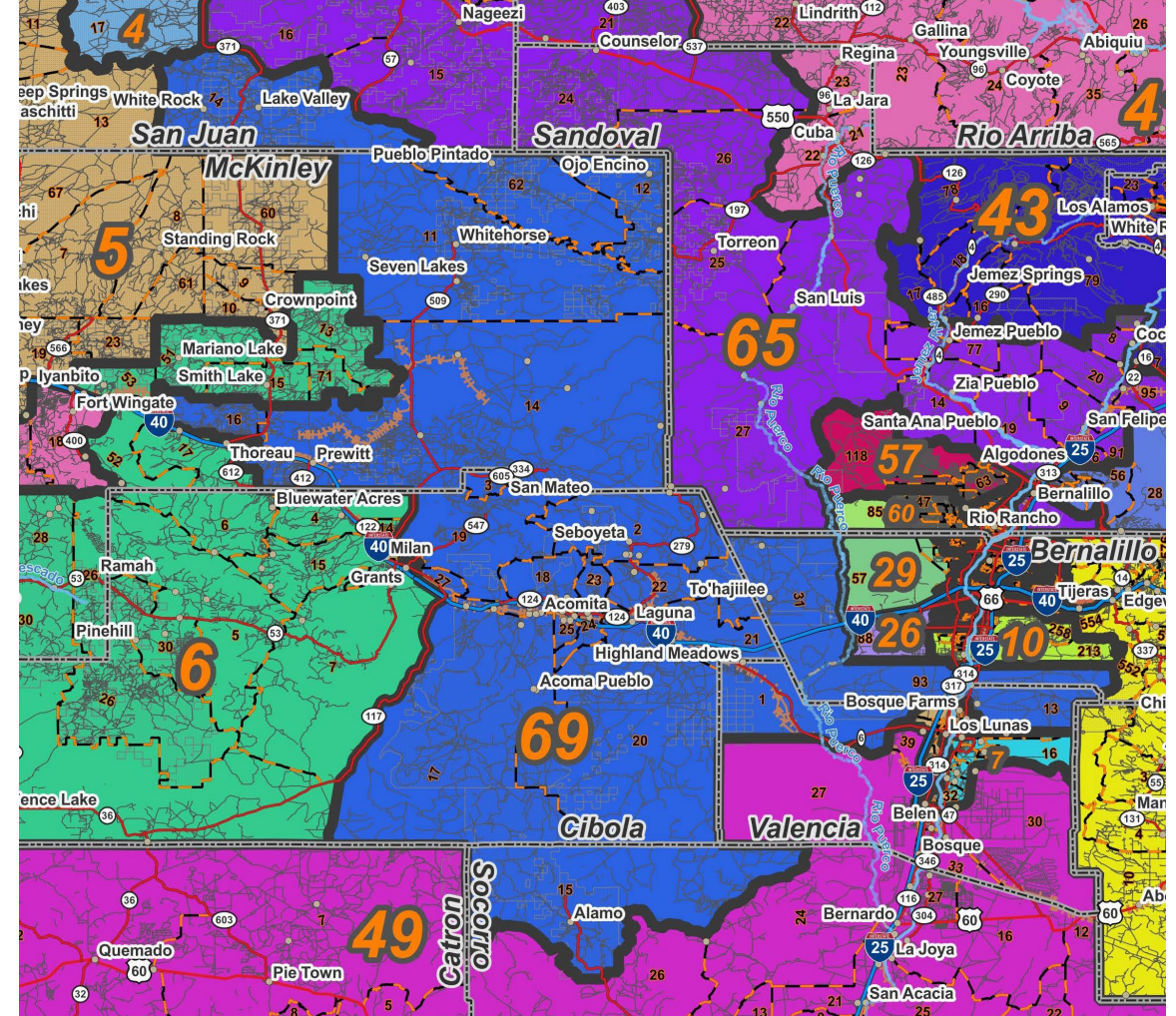
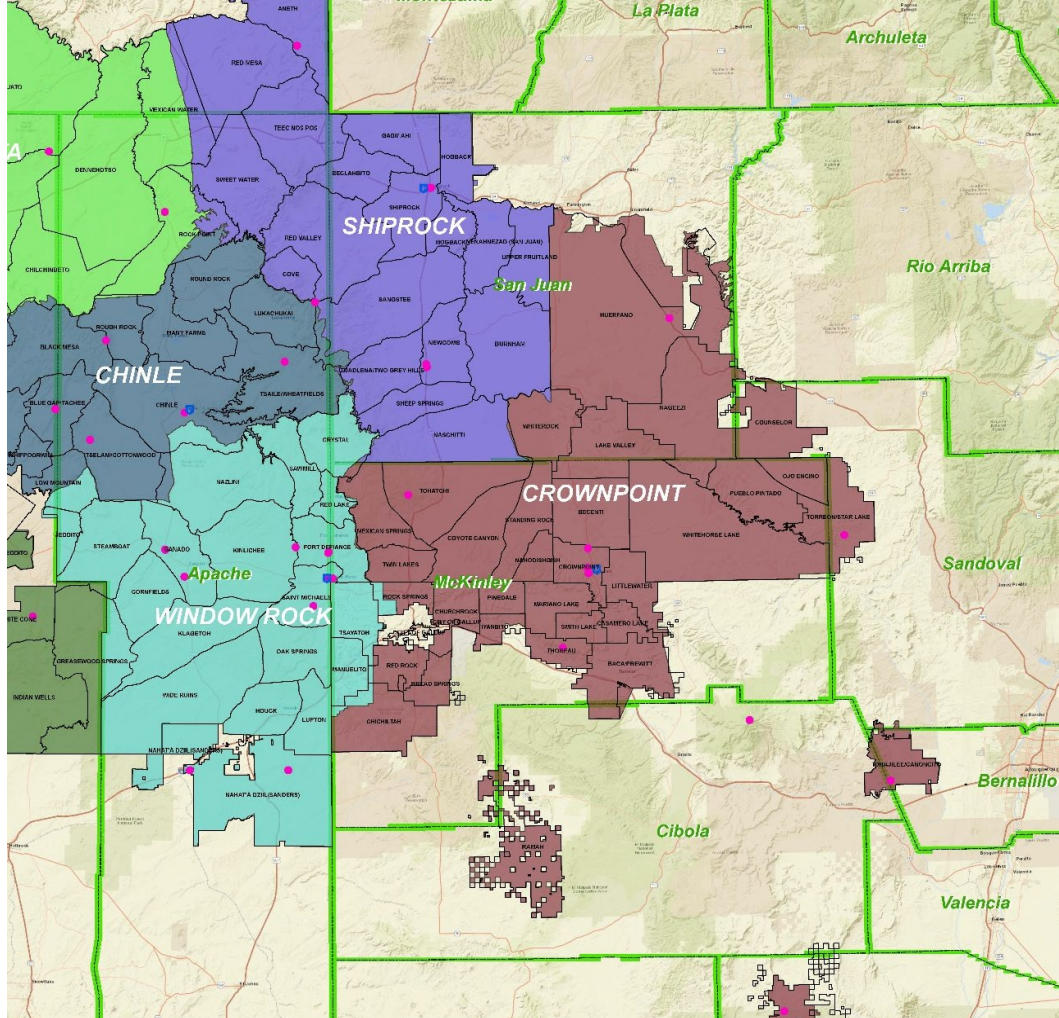
Law enforcement said the UPS driver was inside the truck when it was stolen

"Waited 4 hours to get a call back from police."

"We cannot live in a lawless county."

"Do we not matter as Native Americans?"

Overlapping Jurisdictions Leads to Inaction and Delays



Roundtables and Town Halls with Law Enforcement, Health, & School Officials



What Law Enforcement Told Us

- Staffing shortages
- Housing shortages
- Recruitment challenges
- Retention challenges

The Public Safety Workforce is Under Pressure

- On-the-job injuries (e.g., gun violence)
- Retirements
- Deployments
- Vacancies
- Reassignments

Communications Challenges are a Public Safety Issue

- Cellular dead zones
- Broadband gaps
- Radio limitations

Why Cross-Deputization is Difficult

- Liability insurance
- Training
- Jurisdictional issues
- Resources

What is Working Today

- Informal Emergency Coordination
- Informal Coordination in Non-Emergencies
- Resident Deputy Models in Other Communities
- Multi-Jurisdictional Team Meetings

Opportunity #1: Strengthen Tribal-County-State-Federal Partnerships

- Shared Resources
- Training
- Coverage
- Coordination (e.g., MOUs)

Opportunity #2: Solve the Liability Challenge

- Arizona Risk Pool Model
- Alternative Liability Protections
- Statutory Clarification

Opportunity #3: Invest in People

- Recruitment & Retention (e.g., higher pay and benefits)
- Housing
- Training
- Multi-jurisdictional substations

Opportunity #4: Technology as a Force Multiplier

- Drones
- Starlink
- Broadband
- Gunshot Detection

Summary of Recommendations for Consideration

1. Strengthen Tribal-County-State-Federal partnerships
2. Solve the liability challenge
3. Invest in public safety personnel
4. Increase access to technology

The Opportunity Before Us

These challenges are significant,
but so is our commitment to solving them – together.

