



State of New Mexico
Third Judicial District Court

201 W. PICACHO AVENUE
LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO 88005

FY16 General Fund Appropriation Request Presentation
By Third Judicial District Chief Judge Fernando R. Macias

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

As many of you know, the Third Judicial District Court is one of the busiest courts in the state. In January of this year, the Court embarked on a bold and innovative realignment of judicial caseload responsibilities among its eight sitting judges in an effort to better serve the general public and the legal community by reducing the time needed to resolve cases.

The reorganization can dramatically improve outcomes for families and children. It eliminated the frequent changing of judges handling domestic matters and improved overall efficiencies for the court's employees. While the transition from the old way to the new was challenging, by mid-year it was apparent that the changes were working, and widespread organizational – and community – buy-in is being achieved.

We have realigned the Court's organization to pursue opportunities to gain greater support for programs that help people and enhance efficiencies. Collectively, with judges and attorneys working closely together alongside court staff, we have begun to improve outcomes and expediency across a wide range of case types while eliminating many duplications of effort that have bottlenecked the system in the past.

Even with these changes, however, the Third Judicial District Court remains challenged by the sheer volume of cases that continue to be filed. In addition to the criminal caseload, in any given calendar year, the Drug Court Programs consistently run at close to capacity, with recidivism rates of less than 30 percent for graduates. In our Mediation Program, more than 800 filed lawsuits are sent to mediation each year, in hopes of helping the parties come to a mutually agreeable outcome without having to go to trial. In about 80 percent of the cases, the mediation process succeeds. And in the child-support courtroom, scores of cases are scheduled and handled on the docket each month.

The Third Judicial District Court badly needs an additional judge and support staff to relieve the systemic pressure of the relentless caseload. The last judge position to be created in

the 3rd was in 2006. The FY16 request to support the addition of a new judge, administrative assistant, court reporter, court clerk and bailiff is \$436,500, which includes salaries, benefits, furniture and equipment.

In addition, we need funding of authorized positions in the Clerk's and Law offices, as well as the Deputy CEO. The cost to establish and support these positions with operating funds totals \$311,800. To adequately support the Court's personnel, we must bring on a Human Resources Generalist, for which we have requested \$50,100 in salary and benefits. We also must budget \$101,100 additional dollars for mandatory rate increases related to liability insurance, judges' retirement funds and health insurance for employees.

Each of these requests aligns with the stated priorities articulated by Chief Justice Barbara J. Vigil in her budget request letter to Gov. Martinez and the New Mexico Legislature. The bottom line for the Third Judicial District Court is a requested budgetary increase for FY16 of 13.7 percent to reach a total FY16 budget of \$8,494,400, of which \$7,481,300 will come from General Fund appropriations and the remainder will be derived from other state revenues.

Given the harsh reality of the demanding and relentlessly growing caseload of the Third Judicial District Court, I come before you to respectfully submit that this budget proposal is both realistic and necessary in terms of dollars and staffing, and it reflects a systematic and thoughtful approach to the timely disposition of the caseload, which the resident constituents of Doña Ana County expect and deserve. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.