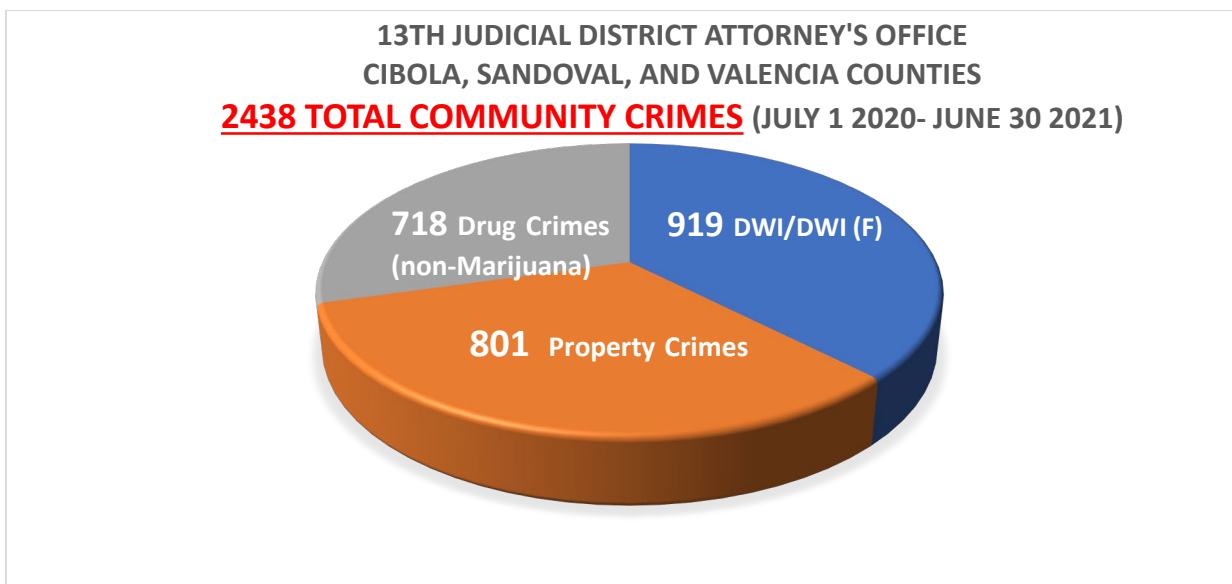
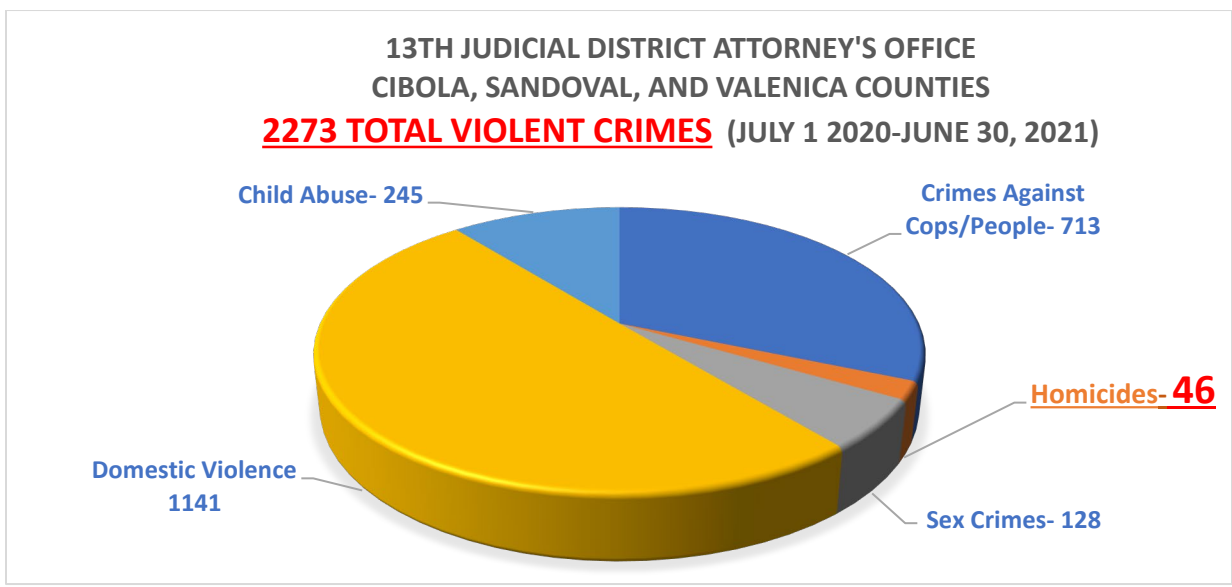


Major Issues as stated in our Base Budget Request:

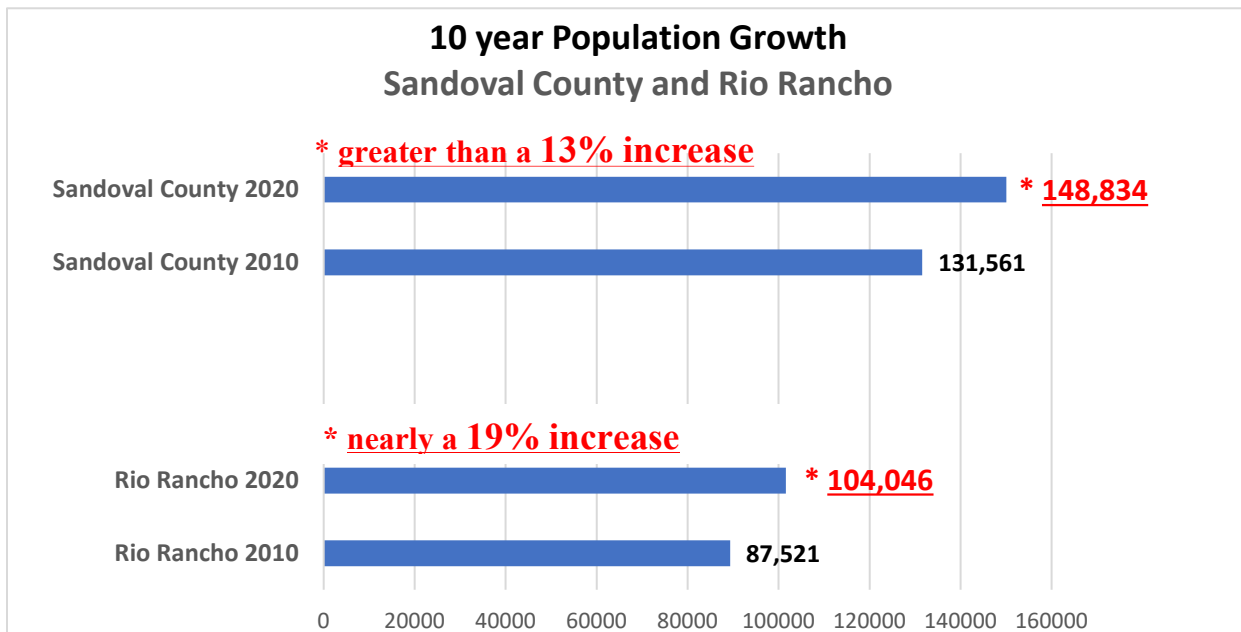
1) High-volume caseloads of more than 200 cases per attorney along with attendant backlogs due to the mandated COVID-19 restrictions which ultimately increase the time to final disposition. (Per our Performance Based Budget core measures, the total caseload district wide is 5,836 which includes screened cases and probation violations or post-conviction prosecutions. The graphs below only represent active prosecutions and excludes screened cases and probation violations or post-conviction prosecutions.)



2) The recent 2020 U.S. Census shows a substantial population growth in the district, requiring additional and permanent Attorney, Support Staff and Victim-Witness Assistant positions district wide. Due to insufficient funding and high employee turnover rates district wide it has made it increasingly difficult for the 13th Judicial DA's Office, as the second largest DA's Office in the State, to meet its constitutional duties and the State's performance measures.

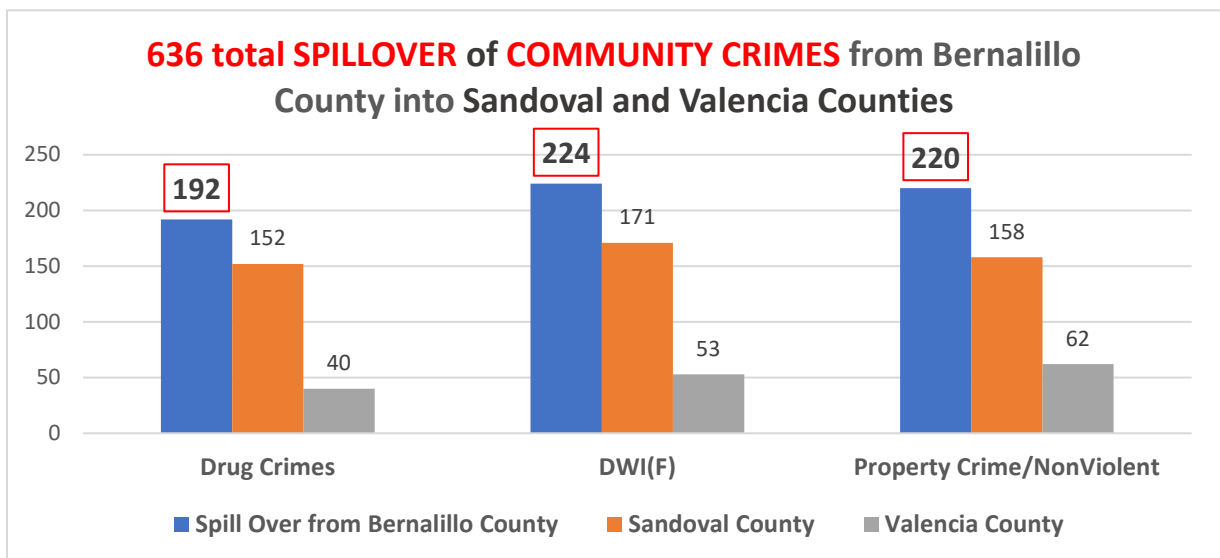
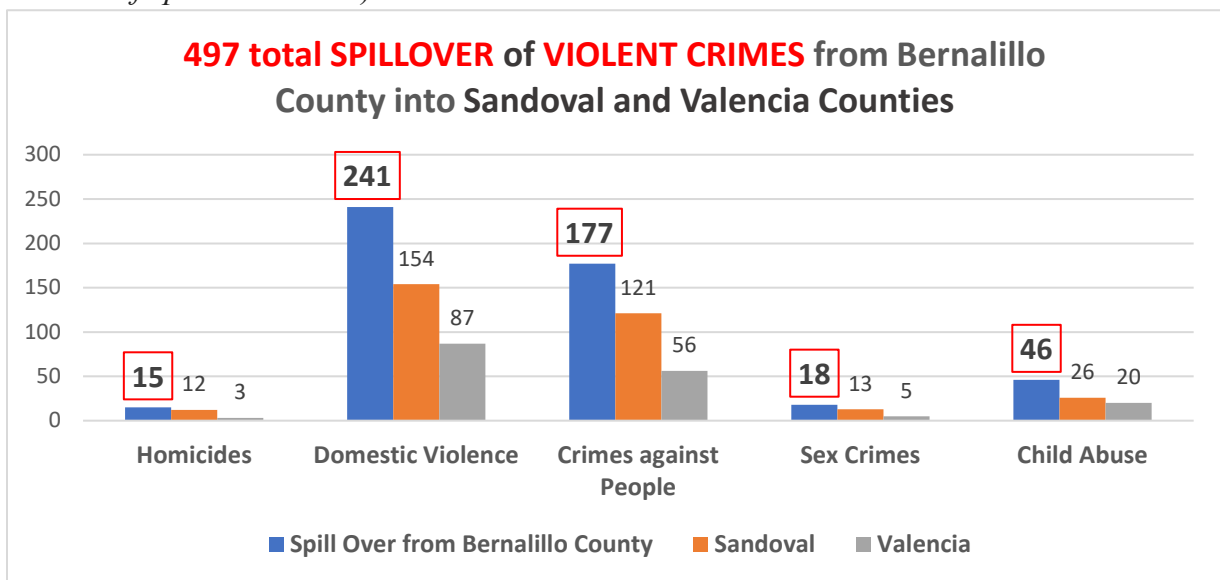
The 13th Judicial DA's Office has faced and will continue to face continued growth in the district. Sandoval County has been and will continue to be one of the State's fastest growing counties. *Santa Fe New Mexican Newspaper Article, "Sandoval rises as New Mexico's fastest-growing county," April 19, 2019.* According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Sandoval County's population grew to a recorded 148,834 from the last 2010 U.S Census of 131,561 **which is an increase of 17,273 or greater than 13 percent.** *U.S. Census QuickFacts.* In addition, according to the *World Population Review*, the city of Rio Rancho is Sandoval County's largest city and is presently considered the third fastest growing city in New Mexico right behind Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Furthermore, and again pursuant to the 2020 U.S. Census, the city of Rio Rancho grew to a recorded 104,046 from the last 2010 U.S Census of 87,521 **which is an increase of 16,525 or near 19 percent.** *Id.*

Generally, and historically speaking, an increase in population can and usually coincides with increases in crimes committed. *See, James J. Nolan III, "Establishing the statistical relationship between population size and UCR crime rate: Its impact and implications."*, *See also, Santa Fe Institute, September 18, 2019, "Bigger cities boost social crimes."*



3) Furthermore, the 13th Judicial DA’s Offices which serve Rio Rancho, NM, Sandoval County, and Belen, NM, Valencia County, continue to deal with increasing “Violent Crimes” and “Community Crimes” due to “spillover” from our neighboring Judicial District and due to the lack of a currently competitive budget we are unable to attract and retain attorneys at inflexible salaries from that of our respective counterpart.

This “spillover” in “Violent crimes” and “Community crimes,” is presently a major concern for the 13th Judicial DA’s Offices in Bernalillo, Sandoval County and in Belen, NM, Valencia County. (The graphs below exclude Cibola County due to the negligible number of spillover cases.)



Thirteenth Judicial District Attorney
Program Description Synopsis

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4) There also exists a need for Attorney Geographical Differential Pay in both the rural satellite 13th Judicial DA's Offices located in Grants, NM, Cibola County, and Belen, NM, Valencia County, in an amount of \$3.25 more per hour for attorneys like that of the previously legislatively approved attorney geographical differential pay given to the Law Offices of the Public Defender (LOPD) with similar populations to that of Ruidoso, NM and Portales, NM, respectively.

“. . . [T]he Public Defender Department (PDD) will receive increases to compensate more rural contract attorneys on an hourly basis. . . PDD funding will increase \$2.8 million, or 5 percent, the highest percentage increase for recurring revenue of the justice partners. The agency's highest priorities were funded, including . . . funding to continue providing geographic pay differentials, which has been an effective strategy in lowering the agency vacancy rate. . .” *New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (April 2020), Legislating for Results: Post-Session Review, Fifty-Fourth Legislature, Second Session, Senator John Arthur Smith, Chairman, pgs. 24 and 99.*

“In addition, LOPD created an innovative program that uses geographic pay differentials to reward the attorneys in our rural offices and acknowledge their willingness to serve New Mexico's rural communities.” *Law Office of the Public Defender, Fiscal Year 2022 Strategic Plan and Annual Report.*

5) I currently have a 6% vacancy rate; this rate has fluctuated as turnover continues to be an issue. I continue to remind Budget Analysts and Legislators that any further reduction to or failure to increase funding would undoubtedly increase attorney caseloads from their presently high-volume and effectively reduce community services my Offices are able to provide. Logically speaking this requested increase will decrease high-volume attorney caseloads/COVID-19 backlog and offset the need to increase contractual services as well as other operating costs.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Barbara Romo, District Attorney
13th Judicial District
Sandoval, Valencia, and Cibola Counties

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