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MEMORANDUM

TO: C.H. Huckelberry
Pima County Administrator

FROM: Barbara LaWall 
Pima County Attorney

DATE: January 10, 2014

RE: FY 2014/15 Proposed Budget

I am pleased to submit my FY 2014/15 proposed budget which reflects my intended allocation of limited federal, state, and local funds. Developing the proposed FY 2014/15 budget provides an opportunity to assess current operational alignment of staffing relative to the changing incoming workload demands placed on our existing resources. In particular it is the later, incoming workload demands, that are unpredictable and which I must constantly monitor and adjust my operations accordingly. However, reviewing historical data also provides opportunities to establish trends as one method in projecting future allocation of my Office's human and financial resources.

In reviewing the most recent data, there are some trends of concern that will continue to stress the operations of my Office. Financial and human resources allocated to my Office have been reduced or stagnant over the past several years, and incoming workload demands have actually increased. In particular, felony criminal filings have increased each year for the past four years. In fact, the projected number of felony case filings will exceed over 6,200 cases for the first time ever. The increase can be attributed to more law enforcement officers and better detective work by law enforcement resulting in a significant increase of felony arrests and cases presented, which exceeded 10,700 presentments last year. The number of cases presented rivals the three highest years between 2005 and 2007 when the number of cases presented routinely exceeded 10,700 each year.

My ability to successfully adjust and realign operations, based on ever-changing demands, is reflected by the many significant accomplishments achieved by my Office. For example, while yearly criminal case filings have increased, so have the number of cases disposed. In fact, last year with a smaller staff, my Office disposed of more than 5,700 criminal cases, the most ever during any one year. Increased stress of doing more with less has contributed to increased employee turnover. I continue to develop new and innovative programs and practices to improve our efficiency in the way we handle and process cases in the criminal justice system.

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Last year, you and the Board of Supervisors took a bold first step in addressing the inadequate compensation of our employees. Economic indicators seem to reflect a more positive outlook on our financial future and we must continue, above all, to focus on employees who have worked hard over the past several years while struggling with their own financial hardships. In the struggle to make ends meet, I continue to observe many employees seeking additional second employment opportunities through their permission requests for outside employment. This is not a healthy situation for my employees. I am deeply concerned about the challenges they face. Unfortunately, many employees, desperate for an increase in their income, are tempted to leave and do so in the face of the heavy workloads they have been asked to handle in light of the reduced staffing levels associated with the overall loss of funding. Failures to continue to increase compensation for our employees will undoubtedly continue to result in the loss of some of our most talented employees to other jurisdictions.

Similar to most service-oriented operations, the vast majority of funding the Pima County Attorney's Office (PCAO) receives is directly allocated to personnel. The nature of PCAO's work requires highly-trained and experienced personnel. Talented experienced men and women are crucial to the success of this Office as we endeavor to protect the community. We cannot continue this work without adequate, appropriately compensated, and well-trained personnel. I urge you and the Board of Supervisors to develop a multi-year compensation plan for PCAO employees during the budget process.

The foundation of the budget reflects the amazing contributions and accomplishments attributable to the dedicated and hardworking employees of this Office. Attached is a brief list of significant accomplishments for the past year that demonstrate the judicious use of limited financial resources while emphasizing the revenues and cost savings generated for Pima County.

With the ongoing commitment and support provided to PCAO by the Board of Supervisors and County Administration, we continue to be the best prosecuting office in Arizona and across the country. While we are efficient and provide a variety of quality services, I am concerned about our ability to maintain these services if compensation for our employees is not increased.

I remain committed to fiscal responsibility. I am proud of my record of running an efficient office and thanks to the efforts of my hard working staff I continue to come in under-budget every year. I will do my best to maintain that record.

Attachment

cc: Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors