

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

During the 16-day Government shutdown earlier this month, many functions of the U.S. Attorney's Office that did not relate directly to the protection of public safety or the preservation of property were discontinued. That included updates to this website, press announcements, and the posting of monthly reports in this space. More importantly, nearly 40% of the employees of this office were placed on involuntary furloughs, which disrupted our ability to accomplish some critical aspects of our mission.

Criminal prosecutors stayed on the job, ensuring that cases continued to be prosecuted, and that public safety needs continued to be addressed. This district has the heaviest case load per federal judge in the nation, and any significant interruption in the operation of the federal criminal justice system would have had severe implications for the timely delivery of justice in future cases. With most support staff, technical and administrative personnel on furlough, however, some aspects of the handling of criminal cases were limited or deferred until the end of the shutdown.

Civil attorneys and support staff were almost all furloughed, resulting in delays to numerous civil cases and potential resolution of those cases. The shutdown also reduced our ability to pursue funds owed to the Government, and to process settlements and other payments.

The Government shutdown, combined with two years of federal budgets based on continuing resolutions, and ten months of the severe budget cuts known as the sequester, threatens to have a longer term impact on our ability to efficiently serve the public. We have an experienced budgetary staff and have been cautious in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars, but like businesses, government agencies need a degree of fiscal certainty in order to efficiently manage resources and plan for the future.

The shutdown also required sacrifices by many employees. Paychecks were delayed, and until it ended there was uncertainty about whether furloughed employees would ever be paid for time in which they were prevented from working. The shutdown came on top of three years of a federal pay freeze, a national hiring freeze that ensures more work for a shrinking pool of employees when one of their number departs, and limitations on travel and training resulting from the sequester. Most of the attorneys and staff in this office are outstanding litigators, who could make far more money in the private sector. They work in the U.S. Attorney's Office because they love their jobs and they believe in our mission of protecting the public. Their dedication has been tested by the budgetary wrangling in Washington, which has had a real impact on their lives.

Fortunately, the women and men of this office are truly dedicated public servants, who conducted themselves throughout the shutdown with professionalism, teamwork and humor. They worked hard to overcome the burdens caused by the shutdown, both professional and personal, and to minimize its impact on our mission. I am proud to be on their team.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

Benjamin B. Wagner