

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

The Eastern District of California is the eighth most populous federal district in the country, and has had a high growth rate for many years. Compared to other U.S. Attorneys' Offices, this office has a low number of Assistant U.S. Attorneys relative to the population of the district. Other data, such as the number of cases filed and of uncompensated overtime hours per attorney, are also indicators of the heavy burden on this office. Fortunately, officials with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington recognize that this district is under-resourced, and have worked with us over the last three years to increase our resources despite severe constraints on the overall budget for the Department.

Within the district, the mismatch between a growing population and limited federal resources has been particularly pronounced in the Fresno Division, comprised of eleven counties from Stanislaus County south to Kern County. According to census data, the population of the four largest counties in the Fresno Division, Fresno, Kern, Stanislaus, and Tulare, grew by 16.5%, 26.9%, 15.1% and 20.2% respectively, between 2000 and 2010. More federal law enforcement and judicial resources are being deployed in response to this trend. Next month, a new federal courthouse will formally be opened in Bakersfield, and several federal law enforcement agencies have increased the number of special agents assigned to that area.

When I was sworn in as U.S. Attorney in November 2009, I stated that one of my priorities would be to increase resources in the Fresno Division. Despite a very challenging budgetary environment, substantial progress has been made in that area. Two white collar Assistant U.S. Attorney positions were moved from the Sacramento office to the Fresno office, and a newly-authorized mortgage fraud prosecutor was placed there. In addition, two newly-authorized prosecutor positions to combat narcotics and crimes related to the southwest border have been filled in the Fresno office. A new civil attorney position was also placed in the Fresno office.

Kern County, at the southern end of the Fresno Division, has experienced remarkable growth over the last two decades, and is particularly in need of additional resources. At my urging, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder requested Congressional authority for this office to open a new branch in Bakersfield. That authority has been granted, and a search for suitable office space is now underway. I anticipate that a new Bakersfield office will be opened within approximately 18 months, initially staffed by two attorneys who will supplement the work done by our prosecutors in Fresno.

The dedicated attorneys and staff in this office do a fabulous job efficiently fulfilling the mission of the Department of Justice. The Eastern District of California is a vast district with tremendous needs, however. Within the constraints imposed by fiscal realities, we will continue to seek more resources to better serve and protect the residents of this district.

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