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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chairman Ramón Valadez and
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney 

DATE: May 14, 2013

RE: 2013/2014 Budget

The 2013/2014 budget for the Office of the Pima County Attorney that has been recommended by the Pima County Administrator is necessary for public safety.

SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET REQUEST

For the past 16 years that I have been County Attorney, my office has always honored the Board of Supervisors' budgetary authority by expending no more than has been allocated to it. Moreover, throughout my tenure, I have done my best to obtain funding from grants and special revenues to reduce the amount that would have to be allocated to my department from the General Fund. In recent years, as much as a third of my departmental budget has been generated from grants and special revenues. I have done my best to operate the County Attorney's Office in a fiscally prudent fashion.

Unfortunately, due to the recession and federal budget cuts, my office has lost \$1.9 million in federal grants this year.

Without a General Fund supplement to my budget, I would have to cut personnel, which would reduce prosecutions and victim services, thereby reducing public safety and hurting the community.

In recognition of the importance of justice and law enforcement, the County Administrator has recommended a supplement of \$1.5 million for my office budget. While this will not make up the full amount of our lost grant revenues, it will provide sufficient funds for us to continue operations.

I have proposed an Early Case Disposition program that should enhance efficiency throughout the County's criminal justice system, including within my own office. This program, combined with the supplemental budget, will enable us to get the job done.

Honorable Chairman Ramón Valadez and
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
May 14, 2013
Page 2

Accordingly, I urge the Board to adopt the supplemental budget for justice and law enforcement recommended by the County Administrator.

COMPENSATION INCREASES

The attorneys, victim advocates, and other staff in the County Attorney's Office are underpaid relative to their counterparts at local public law offices and private law firms. The budget allocated to my office does not provide sufficient funding to increase salaries sufficiently to keep pace with the market. Accordingly, I have been experiencing difficulty in hiring and retaining personnel.

The compensation increases recommended by the County Administrator for the 2013/2014 budget are a good start.

I recognize that fiscal responsibility may not afford the County the ability to pay our employees more at this time. Yet, it is imperative that we find a way in the future to do more to ensure that my office and other departments throughout the County will be able to compensate our well-performing staff commensurate with their value and comparably to what they can obtain elsewhere in the market. Otherwise, we will continue to have difficulty recruiting and retaining highly skilled personnel.

Thank you for the time and attention you invest in reviewing and approving the proposed budget.

cc: C.H. Huckelberry, Pima County Administrator