

Date: February 16, 2026

Pima County Board of Supervisors
33 N. Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701

Re: Opposition to Proposed Division Director, Justice Court Classification (Agenda Item – 02/17/2026)

Chair and Members of the Board,

I write as a taxpayer and concerned community member regarding the proposed creation of a new Division Director, Justice Court classification for the Ajo Justice Court, as outlined in the Board of Supervisors Agenda Item Report (HR_ClassificationCompensation2). While the report frames this new classification as necessary to support administrative oversight and court operations, I have significant concerns about both the fiscal responsibility of this proposal and the circumstances surrounding it.

1. Fiscal Responsibility & Proportionality

The proposed salary range of \$93,392 – \$140,067 (Pay Grade 18) for a Division Director position serving a small, rural justice court raises serious questions about proportionality and responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

Ajo is a small rural community with limited population and comparatively low court volume. Establishing a high-level executive classification with a six-figure salary range for such a small jurisdiction appears excessive and misaligned with operational scale.

At a time when rural communities face ongoing challenges related to infrastructure, staffing, and access to services, taxpayers deserve assurance that compensation structures reflect actual operational need — not internal restructuring preferences.

Is this truly the most prudent and efficient use of county funds?

2. Qualifications & Experience Concerns

As residents and stakeholders, we must ask whether the individual expected to fill this role possesses the depth of experience necessary to justify both the title and compensation level of a Division Director.

The proposed classification outlines substantial responsibilities, including:

- Administrative control
- Court case processing oversight
- Payroll management
- Onboarding and training
- Technology implementation

These are executive-level functions requiring demonstrated leadership, fiscal oversight experience, and proven administrative capacity. If the Board is being asked to elevate a position to this level, the public deserves full transparency regarding the qualifications and experience of the intended candidate.

FEB 17 26 PM 08:01 PC CLK OF BD
EM

Additional Concern: Administrative Order 2025-207 and Attribution of Administrative Issues

Administrative Order 2025-207 cites “administrative concerns” within the Ajo Justice Court as justification for transferring operational control to the Superior Court. If the individual currently serving as court administrator is now being elevated to a higher-level Division Director classification, it raises a fundamental question: Are the very administrative concerns cited in AO 2025-207 not directly attributable to the current court administrator’s performance? Elevating the same individual to an even higher position — with expanded authority and significantly increased compensation — appears inconsistent with the rationale used to justify the administrative takeover. Before approving this classification, the Board should require clarity regarding how administrative concerns were assessed, who was deemed responsible, and why the proposed solution is to promote rather than correct or address the underlying issues.

3. Accountability & Tribal Government Relations

If this position is intended for the current Ajo Court Administrator, it has been mentioned by tribal community members that there was, or is, an outstanding complaint regarding this individual’s past interaction with the Tohono O’odham Nation.

In a county where respectful, government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations are essential, it is troubling that the Board would consider supporting a classification that appears to benefit an individual with unresolved concerns related to Tribal relations.

Before advancing this proposal, the Board should ask:

- Have concerns regarding Tribal relations been fully investigated?
- Has accountability been exercised?
- What message does this send to Tribal partners and rural Indigenous communities?

Public trust and intergovernmental respect must remain central considerations.

4. Governance & Process Transparency

The BOSAIR states that this new classification would not create an “immediate cost impact” because hiring costs would be absorbed within the department’s current budget. However, reallocating internal funds does not eliminate cost — it simply shifts it.

Taxpayers deserve transparency regarding:

- Long-term budget impact
- Future cost escalation
- Whether this position duplicates existing oversight roles
- Whether lower-cost administrative alternatives were evaluated

The public should not be asked to subsidize structural changes that appear tailored to accommodate a specific individual rather than demonstrable operational necessity.

5. Community Equity & Fairness

The report references alignment with “Workforce Development for Underserved Populations.” Yet underserved communities — particularly rural and Tribal populations — are best served by:

- Efficient justice services
- Stable staffing
- Respectful intergovernmental relationships
- Fiscal discipline

High executive compensation for a small rural court does not inherently improve service delivery. True equity requires transparency, accountability, and demonstrated performance.

Conclusion

As a taxpayer, I respectfully urge the Board of Supervisors to:

- Delay approval of this classification
- Conduct a transparent review of qualifications and community concerns
- Fully address any unresolved issues regarding Tribal relations
- Reevaluate whether a Division Director classification — at this compensation level — is appropriate for the Ajo Justice Court

Public office and public funding require public confidence. I ask that the Board proceed cautiously and prioritize fiscal responsibility, fairness, and accountability.

Respectfully,
Mildred Manuel
(O’odham/Yaqui)
Pima County Voter
Ajo Resident