NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Barry Massey, Administrative Office of the Courts, communications officer
bmassey@nmcourts.gov
505-827-4805 office
505-470-3426 cell

ALBUQUERQUE – The state Supreme Court on Tuesday reiterated its commitment to improving the criminal justice system in Bernalillo County through recently implemented rules for handling felony cases in the 2nd Judicial District.

Justices met for two hours with District Attorney Kari Brandenburg, Police Chief Gorden Eden, Bernalillo County Sheriff Manuel Gonzales, and Chief Public Defender Jorge Alvarado to discuss possible amendments to a case management order implemented earlier this year to resolve felony cases without undue delay and reduce a criminal case backlog.

"We recognize the challenges facing not only the Judiciary but also our justice partners," Chief Justice Barbara Vigil said. "But we remain fully committed to doing what is possible with our justice partners to achieve what the people of Bernalillo County deserve – a criminal justice system that ensures public safety while protecting the constitutional rights of victims and defendants."

Under the procedural rules, which apply only in Bernalillo County, criminal cases must go to trial or otherwise be resolved within six months or up to a year depending on a case's complexity. Before adoption of the CMO, it was not unusual for cases to take years to be resolved.

"We look forward to this opportunity to work together toward our common goal – a criminal justice system in Bernalillo County that functions fairly, efficiently and effectively for the benefit of victims, defendants and the public," the Chief Justice said at the outset of the meeting.

Possible amendments to the case management order are under consideration by the Court in response to feedback from the district court, prosecutors, defense counsel and law enforcement. Among those proposals are ones that could extend the time for prosecutors to initially share evidence with the defense in certain violent felony cases.

Members of the Court made clear that prosecutors are not required to complete their full case and turn over all evidence initially under the case management order. The rules require the

prosecution to initially share with the defense only the evidence used to charge someone. Prosecutors have always had a continuing obligation under longstanding rules of criminal procedure to turn over evidence to the defense to allow the accused an opportunity to prepare for trial. That obligation remains unchanged under the case management order.

At the meeting, 2nd District judges, the district attorney, law enforcement officials and the public defender agreed the case management order, even in its current form, is an improvement to the criminal justice system and they committed to work together to provide a stronger and more effective system of justice in Bernalillo County.

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