



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

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Following the close of my first year in office, I drafted and distributed a year-end update to let citizens know what we had accomplished in the first twelve months and what we expected to accomplish in the future. The letter was distributed via email, was discussed at a media briefing and was even printed in its entirety by the Times Sentinel serving West Sedgwick County. What follows is the update for calendar 2014, my second full year in office.

CRIMINAL DOCKET

The number of cases pending and unresolved on the criminal docket was a primary concern my first year. From a high of 1246 cases sitting on the docket in July of 2012, we took steps during my first year to address this issue. Working with the courts and defense counsel, we had seen a 30% reduction in the number of cases pending for jury trial by the end of 2013, while still filing more cases than we did in 2012.

In 2014, we closed the year with fewer than 800 pending jury trials, having seen the number dip below 700 during the course of the year. This, while we still filed roughly 280 more cases than we did in 2012. So, while improvements in efficiencies can still be made, I am optimistic that the changes made the first year have found staying power.

ECONOMIC CRIMES UNIT CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

The creation of the Economic Crimes Unit during my first year solidified our commitment to victims of property crimes. In 2013, the unit resolved over 170 cases prior to the first evidentiary hearing and increased that number to 231 in 2014. Meaning, the cases pled, and restitution was ordered prior to any witnesses being called or inconvenienced.

In 2013, the economic crime unit made a point of trying to obtain actual restitution payments to victims at the time of the plea, rather than simply obtaining an order to that effect. In 2013, they were able to obtain over \$10,000 in direct payments to victims at or before the time of plea. In 2014, the unit's added focus on this effort lead to a marked increase, with \$192,410.03 in actual payments to victims of property crime.

The Consumer Protection Division of the office took over 1300 phone calls from consumers and 136 walk-ins in 2014. The amount of restitution returned to consumers in 2014 as a result of work of the consumer protection unit increased to over \$434,000.00--up from the

previous four year high in 2012 of \$320,000. Additionally, the unit obtained a monetary judgment against a car dealership in the region arising from a false advertisement.

GANG UNIT, SEX CRIMES UNIT, GENERAL TRIAL UNIT AND TRAFFIC UNIT.

The attorneys in the Gang Unit, General Crimes Unit and Sex Crimes Unit continue to handle a high volume of gun crimes, gang-involved cases, robberies, rapes, child sex crimes and human trafficking cases.

Between 1994 and 2012, the office filed capital murder charges in six separate incidents. My first year in office, I personally tried the capital murder arising from the Dollar General double murder. Since that time, we have filed capital murder charges arising from five additional incidents, keeping our prosecutors very busy.

The attorneys and staff in our traffic unit continue to personally handle roughly half of the 21,800 traffic cases filed in Sedgwick County last year.

JUVENILE AND CHILD IN NEED OF CARE

As I wrote last year, the attorneys and staff in our child in need of care division handle some of the most taxing and emotionally draining cases in the judicial system. In 2014, that unit filed 653 cases, up from 502 in 2013.

Our juvenile offender division handled 1154 juvenile offender cases. In addition to their regular tasks, attorneys at the juvenile division also covered over 800 care and treatment cases (involuntary mental commitments) involving adult mental health patients.

CASES PROSECUTED BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Personally, I successfully tried the case involving the young man responsible for stealing the wedding ring from the finger of an unconscious woman following her incapacitation due to a medical condition while in the drive through lane at a fast food restaurant. I am set to try a murder in February, the shooting of a Sheriff's Deputy in the spring, the man accused of raping a 100 year old woman, while also assigning myself to several of the capital cases we have pending. In short, I am trying to maintain my commitment to keeping a personal presence in the courtroom.

I was also very pleased to have received a community leadership award from The Kansas African American Museum for "outstanding work in the community," namely for my efforts to interact with minority communities, add transparency to the office and to "demystify" the process involved in the investigation of officer-involved shootings.

FUTURE GOALS

We continue to work with our local legislators to improve laws to protect our citizens, including the metal theft bill to combat metal theft statewide.

I continue to look for ways to improve community trust in the judicial process. In 2013, I offered assistance through my membership on the board of directors for the Kansas County and District Attorneys Association toward the passage of the new law to open affidavits filed in support of criminal cases in Kansas. Efforts to add transparency by engaging the public and explaining what we do in the office further this mission.

Using money saved entirely from budget savings from 2013, this year we expanded and improved the waiting room for citizens who have business with our office, including a separate quiet room for families of homicide victims or sex crimes victims.

Last year our office processed the equivalent of 19,000,000 documents in discovery in our criminal division alone. Meaning, all the investigative records (reports, videos, photos, and the like) were taken in, copied for our lawyers and provided to defense counsel. While we look for ways each year to improve efficiencies, I continue to be impressed with the quality and work ethic of our attorneys and staff.

Running an office with 50 attorneys, covering twenty plus areas of responsibility, with support from roughly 70 staff is a daily challenge. I am energized by the opportunity and challenges.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Marc Bennett
District Attorney