



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
GARFIELD, PITKIN, AND RIO BLANCO COUNTIES**

Benjamin Sollars, District Attorney

October 15, 2025

Hon. Kelly McNicholas Kury, Hon. Jeffrey Woodruff, Hon. Patti Clapper, Hon. Greg Poschman, Hon. Francie Jacober
Board of County Commissioners
Pitkin County
530 E. Main Street, Suite 302
Aspen, CO 81611

Re: 2026 Proposed Budget for the Office of the District Attorney

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the Ninth Judicial District Attorney's Office, I respectfully submit our proposed 2026 budget. Our mission remains dedicated to victim-centered prosecutions, holding offenders accountable for harm done to the community, and providing opportunities for genuine reform to those seeking to restore their lives and contribute positively to society. The Office of the District Attorney is grateful for the Board's continued commitment to supporting this mission and ensuring our office has the tools needed to serve the community responsibly and effectively. At the same time, we recognize the significant financial challenges before us and affirm our commitment to responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to this office.

The past year has been both foundational and productive for our team. In my first year as District Attorney, we established our office's eight core values: Service, Empathy, Integrity, Accountability, Professionalism, Communication, Leadership, and Gratitude. These values are the compass guiding the work we do, and they are routinely demonstrated by our team.

Further, our mission is reflected in our day-to-day operations. In the first six months of this year alone, our Victim Witness team has assisted 799 victims of crime, providing them with information about the court process, connecting them to resources, and ensuring their voices were heard in the pursuit of truth and justice. Additionally, our prosecutors have filed 320 felony cases, 2,117 misdemeanors, and 265 petty offense/traffic infraction cases, for a total of 2,702 cases to date. Behind these numbers are victims whose voices deserve

to be heard, communities that rely on us to hold offenders accountable, and individuals offered opportunities for genuine reform where appropriate. These statistics reflect the breadth of our mission in action.

As part of my transition to the elected District Attorney, we conducted interviews with the team asking why they stay with the Office of the District Attorney, and the feedback was remarkable. The consistent themes were a deep commitment to helping victims, pride in serving the public, and a strong sense of team. Our employees described enjoying the chance to help victims navigate the justice system, valuing the positive energy and collegiality of their coworkers, and appreciating the discretion to do what is right and just. In short, people stay in this office because of the people they work with and the shared purpose they feel. That same spirit extends into the community, where our team has invested in training the next generation of law enforcement, speaking with students about the justice system, and volunteering in community events. These efforts demonstrate we are not only prosecutors of cases, but active partners in building safer, stronger communities.

Since the Ninth Judicial District is a multi-county district, each county is proportionally responsible for bearing the necessary expenses of maintaining an office for the transaction of official business. Each county is therefore responsible in proportion to its population relative to the total combined population of Garfield, Pitkin, and Rio Blanco Counties, which comprise the Ninth Judicial District. See C.R.S. §20-1-302. Based on recent population estimates, the apportionment is as follows:

- Garfield County: 73.15%
- **Pitkin County: 19.21%**
- Rio Blanco County: 7.64%

This apportionment results in Pitkin County contributions totaling \$1,014,303, which represents a 2.13% increase from the 2025 budget.

In preparing the proposed 2026 budget, we have continued to approach our planning with prudence and transparency. While we recognize that counties across the state are facing fiscal pressures at various levels, we are mindful of maintaining efficiency and stewardship regardless of local revenue conditions. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with Pitkin County's finance staff earlier this year and the collaborative spirit shown in allowing us to use 2025 funds to address upcoming IT needs, including the server and computer

replacements initially set for 2026. This proactive step enabled us to remove these costs from our 2026 request.

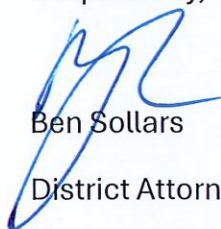
Similarly, despite the nationwide reduction in federal VOCA dollars, we have withdrawn a previous request to increase the Victim Witness budget, even as we continue to monitor this serious funding challenge to constitutionally mandated services. With those adjustments, what remains in our request is straightforward: **a 3% cost of living increase and an additional \$6,000 for dues, training, and transportation.**

More than 90% of our budget is personnel, and I am grateful for the Board's continued recognition that our ability to serve the community depends directly on supporting the people who do this work. Our only way to serve the community is through attorneys, investigators, legal assistants, and victim advocates who show up every day. A modest salary increase ensures we can retain them and keep pace with the high cost of living in our valley, where recruitment and retention remain ongoing challenges. This work is demanding, and our staff regularly confront the vicarious trauma of handling difficult and sometimes tragic cases, which makes retention and support all the more important.

On the non-personnel side, dues and training are not luxuries. They are how we remain competent in court, meet professional requirements, and maintain credibility. Even with these items included, our operating expenses reflect a budget decrease from 2025.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing partnership. I remain committed to working collaboratively to balance fiscal responsibility with the critical public safety and victim services upon which our community depends.

Respectfully,



Ben Sollars

District Attorney, Ninth Judicial District

	2026	2026 BUDGET REQUEST			2025	Difference	% of Change
REVENUES							
COUNTY CONTRIBUTIONS:							
Garfield County	3,960,366				3,841,634	118,732	3.09%
Pitkin County	1,014,303				993,125	21,178	2.13%
Rio Blanco County	403,509				392,430	11,079	2.82%
Total County Contributions:	5,378,178				5,227,189	150,988	2.89%
Plus State Contribution	191,032				127,905	63,127.00	49.35%
TOTAL REVENUE:	5,569,210				5,355,094	214,115	4.00%
		Garfield	Pitkin	Rio Blanco			
EXPENSES:		73.15%	19.21%	7.64%			
Advertising	1,000	731	192	76	1,000	-	0.00%
Case Expenses	15,000	10,972	2,882	1,146	15,000	-	0.00%
I.T. Budget	73,962	54,100	14,210	5,653	85,145	(11,183)	-13.13%
Dues, Registrations and Fees	36,150	26,442	6,945	2,763	35,150	1,000	2.84%
Liability Insurance	26,500	19,383	5,091	2,025	26,500	-	0.00%
Office Supplies	22,500	16,458	4,323	1,720	22,500	-	0.00%
Postage	3,000	2,194	576	229	3,000	-	0.00%
Training	18,000	13,166	3,458	1,376	15,000	3,000	20.00%
Payroll							
Wages	3,366,007	2,462,069	646,677	257,261	3,267,968	98,039	3.00%
FICA/Medicare	257,500	188,348	49,471	19,680	250,000	7,500	3.00%
Health Insurance	959,285	701,670	184,298	73,317	871,171	88,114	10.11%
Disability Insurance	26,000	19,018	4,995	1,987	26,000	-	0.00%
Retirement - CCOERA	61,216	44,777	11,761	4,679	64,517	(3,301)	-5.12%
Retirement - PERA	315,440	230,729	60,602	24,109	286,400	29,040	10.14%
Workers Compensation	4,000	2,926	768	306	4,000	-	0.00%
Professional Services	28,000	20,481	5,379	2,140	28,000	-	0.00%
Telephone	1,000	731	192	76	1,000	-	0.00%
Transportation	46,000	33,647	8,838	3,516	44,000	2,000	4.55%
Victim Witness Program	210,000	153,605	40,345	16,050	210,000	-	0.00%
TOTAL SHARED EXPENSES:	5,470,560	4,001,446	1,051,004	418,109	5,256,350	214,209	4.08%
Garfield County Separate Expenses (100%)							
Equipment Replacement/Maintenance	1,100	1,100			1,100	-	0.00%
Capital		-				-	#N/A
Copier Lease	6,000	6,000			6,000	-	0.00%
Rent	91,550	91,550			91,550	-	0.00%
Total Garco at 100%	98,650	98,650			98,650	-	0.00%
TOTAL EXPENSES:	5,569,210	4,100,096	1,051,004	418,109	5,355,000	214,209	4.00%
Less State Contribution	(191,032)	(139,731)	(36,701)	(14,600)	(127,905)	(63,127)	49.35%
TOTAL EXPENSES TO COUNTIES	5,378,178	3,960,366	1,014,303	403,509	5,227,095	151,082	2.89%