



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 5, 2022

Gov. Lujan Grisham requests additional federal law enforcement assigned to New Mexico

Federal agents will support governor's efforts to grow local law enforcement, hire new officers

SANTA FE – Following her continued investments in New Mexico public safety, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has asked the Department of Justice to support her request to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) for additional federal law enforcement resources to support state and local public safety efforts amid a nationwide increase in violent crime.

In a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland, Gov. Lujan Grisham asked for additional FBI agents to be assigned to New Mexico following a similar request made in June to FBI Director David Wray that did not result in additional resources. The letter sent recently to Attorney General Garland notes that Director Wray recently reported a 50% decrease in homicides when the FBI initiated a surge of agents and resources to its office in Buffalo, New York.

“Once these resources are allocated to New Mexico, I am confident the FBI and state law enforcement officers will achieve similar success as the Buffalo office,” the governor writes in the letter to Attorney General Garland. “Both New Mexico law enforcement agencies and the FBI are partners in addressing and preventing violent crime. It is therefore imperative to provide the tools and support to achieve our common goal of ending violent crime in New Mexico.”

Gov. Lujan Grisham has invested more in public safety than any previous administration and secured additional federal crime-fighting resources in recent years. In the last four years, Gov. Lujan Grisham has invested nearly three times more in public safety infrastructure than in the previous eight years combined.

In her letter to the Attorney General, the governor highlighted her recent delivery of more than \$40 million to 29 law enforcement departments across the state for the hiring of over 300 new officers, requesting additional federal agents to support the state's ongoing work to grow the ranks of law enforcement officers statewide and bolster public safety efforts across New Mexico.

"We owe our law enforcement officers an immeasurable debt," the governor wrote in her initial request to FBI Director Wray. "Therefore, we must provide the best resources available as they constantly place their lives in danger to keep our communities safe. At this time, New Mexico's law enforcement officers require the support and resources that only the federal government can provide."

Gov. Lujan Grisham has devoted significant resources to stem the drug trade and accompanying violence in New Mexico communities. In addition to allocating tens of millions of dollars for officer recruitment and retention, the governor also signed into law a 16% pay increase for New Mexico State Police officers. The state will also soon break ground on a \$20 million state-of-the-art command center for the State Police. The state recently partnered with federal agencies to fight crime on the streets of New Mexico through Operation Blue Crush, a 90-day effort that concluded in June and resulted in more than 300 arrests and the confiscation of over \$5.4 million in fentanyl. In 2019, the governor also created the Fugitive Task Force, which has apprehended more than 540 violent fugitives in New Mexico, and coordinated multiple police surges around the state.

Earlier this year, the governor signed a bipartisan package of initiatives designed to combat crime that include:

- Strengthening penalties for gun crimes, including a felon in possession of a firearm and the use of a firearm during the commission of a felony;
- Creating criminal statutes relating to violent threats, property damage, and chop shops;
- Eliminating the statute of limitations for second degree murder;
- Signing the Violence Intervention Program Act, accompanied by \$9 million in the budget to establish violence intervention programs statewide;
- And allocating several million dollars for Crime Reduction Grants.

The governor is committed to pursuing every available avenue to continue to address the scourge of crime, including increased firearm safety measures and a rebuttable presumption to keep violent criminals behind bars.

The two letters in their entirety are attached.

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State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

September 15, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

On June 21, 2022, I wrote a letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation requesting that it increase its presence in New Mexico by assigning additional agents to our State. Unfortunately, the only response we received was to inform us that the Bureau did not have the resources available to assign additional agents to New Mexico. Given this response, I feel compelled to now write directly to you for assistance.

Since taking office, I have remained committed to keeping New Mexico communities safe. In the past legislative session, I spearheaded a \$50 million appropriation that will put an additional 317 police officers on New Mexico streets. This legislative accomplishment mirrors the \$156 million Congress allocated for the 2022 Fiscal Year to the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Program, providing funding directly to law enforcement agencies to hire additional officers.¹ President Biden's Safer America Plan similarly seeks to support state law enforcement agencies with a \$10.877 billion appropriation in mandatory funding for the COPS Hiring Program to recruit, train, support, and manage 100,000 additional police officers over the next five years.²

While these collective efforts are significant, they are not enough to address the violent crime currently present in New Mexico. The number of law enforcement officers per capita in New Mexico decreased beginning in 2017.³ Fortunately, the number of law enforcement officers has increased during my administration; however, the number of officers in New Mexico has remained

¹ *COPS Hiring Program (CHP)*, United States Department of Justice, <https://cops.usdoj.gov/chp> (last visited Sept. 13, 2022).

² *FACT Sheet: President Biden's Safer America Plan*, The White House, (Aug. 1, 2022) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/01/fact-sheet-president-bidens-safer-america-plan-2/>.

³ *Crime Data Explorer: New Mexico*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/le/pe> (last visited Sept. 12, 2022).

well below the national average.⁴ Recently, Caroline Otto, Assistant Director of the FBI Resource Planning Office, reported to my office that over the last five years the FBI increased the number of full-time task force officers working violent crimes in New Mexico from four in 2017 to the current number of twenty-nine. While this is a good start, more must be done to target high level criminals and to continue to reduce crime in the southwestern United States. Indeed, since I wrote my June 21, 2022, letter, there have been at least forty-five homicides in our largest city, Albuquerque, and more than half of those remain unsolved.⁵ The shortage of law enforcement officers presents a particular problem for New Mexico. Geographically, our state is the fifth largest state and has one of the higher poverty rates in the country.⁶ Therefore, our resources to combat the national surge in violent crime are very limited.

These statistics underscore the importance of my request. Additional federal agents are needed to alleviate the current strain on New Mexico's law enforcement offices. Director Wray recently reported when the FBI initiated a surge of agents and resources to its office in Buffalo, New York there was a 50% decrease in homicides during deployment.⁷ Our State requires the same level of investigative, analytical, and technical resources that only your office can provide.

Once these resources are allocated to New Mexico, I am confident the FBI and State law enforcement officers will achieve similar success as the Buffalo office. Both New Mexico law enforcement agencies and the FBI are partners in addressing and preventing violent crime. It is therefore imperative to provide the tools and support to achieve our common goal of ending violent crime in New Mexico.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office if you wish to discuss this matter in greater detail. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico

⁴ *Crime Data Explorer: United States*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/le/pe> (last visited Sept. 13, 2022).

⁵ 2022: ABQ Area Homicides, Albuquerque Journal https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1wQ2EE9fzr9S7EZEEZg_8e0NDvLle4F_e&ll=35.079074000000034%2C-106.643406&z=11 (last visited Sept. 6, 2022).

⁶ See Rachel Moskowitz, *Poverty in New Mexico: 2019*, Labor Market Review (Feb. 2021) https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Portals/0/DM/LMI/Poverty_in_NM_2019.pdf; *QuickFacts New Mexico*, U.S. Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NM> (last visited Sept. 13, 2022).

⁷ Director Christopher Wray, *Directors Remarks to the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, (May 2, 2022) <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/directors-remarks-to-the-association-of-state-criminal-investigative-agencies-05022>.



State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

June 15, 2022

Director Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Director Wray:

As you are aware, our country is experiencing a surge in crime. Violent crime in the United States increased by 5.6% between 2019 and 2020.¹ Shockingly, the U.S. murder rate rose 30% during the same time period.² Deaths due to drug overdose are also on the rise. Between April of 2020 and April of 2021 drug overdose deaths increased in the United States by 28.5% from the year before.³ Federal agencies recognize these overdoses are due in part to organized crime. As stated by DEA Acting Administrator D. Christopher Evans, “the cartels are spreading their poison into communities across the Nation.”⁴ Indeed, Fentanyl comes in at every entry point in the country including points of entry, harbors, and even the mail.⁵

Our State has devoted significant resources to stem the drug trade and accompanying violence in our communities. I recently signed legislation increasing pay by 16% for New Mexico State Police officers. Additionally, \$8 million has been allocated for the recruitment of new officers and we will soon break ground on a \$20 million state-of-the-art command center for the State Police. Even more recently, New Mexico devoted \$50 million for an officer recruitment fund. We owe our law enforcement officers an immeasurable debt; therefore, we must provide the best resources available as they constantly place their lives in danger to keep our communities safe. At this time,

¹ *FBI Releases 2020 Crime Statistics*, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Sept. 27, 2021), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/press-releases/fbi-releases-2020-crime-statistics>.

² John Gramlich, *What we know about the increase in U.S. murders in 2020*, Pew Research Center (Oct. 27, 2021) <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/10/27/what-we-know-about-the-increase-in-u-s-murders-in-2020/>.

³ *Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. Top 1000,000 Annually*, Ctr. for Disease Control and Prevention (Nov. 17, 2022) https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm.

⁴ *DEA Launches Project Wave Breaker to Stop Flood of Deadly Fentanyl*, Drug Enforcement Administration (Apr. 27, 2021) <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2021/04/27/dea-launches-project-wave-breaker-stop-flood-deadly-fentanyl-1>.

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2019/08/23/fentanyl-flowed-through-us-postal-service-vehicles-crossing-southern-border/>

New Mexico's law enforcement officers require the support and resources that only the federal government can provide.

I am hereby asking you to increase your presence in New Mexico, by assigning no less than 50 additional agents. I believe that more agents, as well as greater visibility in the community, can help stem the flow of drugs and violence. I am confident that with this additional support our state can put this period of senseless violence behind us.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office if you wish to discuss this matter in greater detail. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Lujan Grisham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico

cc: Special Agent in Charge Raul Bujanda
United States Attorney Alexander M.M. Uballez