



**JAIME ESPARZA**  
District Attorney  
Thirty-Fourth Judicial District  
(El Paso, Culberson and Hudspeth Counties)

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**EL PASO COUNTY RECEIVES 2.7 MILLION REIMBURSEMENT  
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
Funds will help lessen impact of state budget cuts**

El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar today announced that the Department of Justice has reimbursed \$2.7 million in expenditures the County of El Paso incurred while prosecuting and incarcerating federally referred offenders during FY 2008 and 2009.

The first reimbursement, of \$135,000 for cases handled during fiscal year 2008, was received on January 25, 2011. The second reimbursement, in the amount of \$2.57 million for cases handled during FY 2009, arrived Monday, May 23, 2011. All the monies have been transferred to the County's general fund.

The two payments mark the end of a multi-year dispute over billings submitted by the El Paso County to the Department of Justice under the Southwest Border Prosecution Initiative (SWBPI) during fiscal years 2001 through 2006.

Additionally, last week the County of El Paso submitted bills in the amount of \$1.06 million, for cases handled during FY 2010.

The resolution clears the way for El Paso County to remain eligible to receive future federal reimbursements for prosecuting and jailing federally referred offenders. This agreement also guarantees federal law enforcement agents will receive the necessary assistance from local law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney's Office to process and prosecute individuals accused of criminal violations.

The push to receive reimbursement from the federal government was spearheaded by District Attorney Jaime Esparza and County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal.

"Over the past 12 months our offices have worked tirelessly to ensure that every county money eligible for reimbursement was aggressively pursued," said County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal.



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District Attorney Jaime Esparza said, “Compensating border counties for the criminal justice cost they incur assisting the federal government with lower level criminal cases makes good sense. State prosecutors have the flexibility to handle these routine cases efficiently and hold all offenders accountable. An equitable partnership between federal, state, and local authorities works and is necessary to curtail the flow of illegal drugs into our community.”

El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar recognized the hard work of employees from the Auditor’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, and the County Attorney’s Office, who worked for several months on getting the Office of the Inspector General the necessary information to resolve this dispute.

“In the upcoming months the El Paso County will be facing serious financial challenges due to the budget cuts that the Texas legislature is expected to approve during its current session. These reimbursements could not have come at a better time. Commissioners Court is working very diligently to reduce expenditures and increase revenue to avoid, to the extent possible, a raise in property taxes for next fiscal year,” Escobar said.

“We will make sure these monies will go long ways towards achieving that goal,” Escobar concluded.

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***About the Southwest Border Prosecution Initiative:** In 2000, under the leadership of District Attorney Jaime Esparza, a coalition of border prosecutors alerted the federal government that some of the nation’s poorest counties were shouldering the financial burden of accepting federally-referred cases into the criminal justice system. For many years, state prosecutors along the southwest border provided the federal government with support allowing great flexibility to prosecute lower level offenders in state court.*

*In 2001, the federal government created the Southwest Border Prosecution Initiative through the Bureau of Justice Assistance that reimbursed border counties for their assistance in prosecuting lower-level federally-initiated drug cases. This reimbursement program has facilitated an efficient use of the limited resources available to prosecute crime along the border.*