



The Defender: Coronavirus Edition

A mini  newsletter

Corona week 13
June 12, 2020



Dear Colleagues,

The last two weeks have shown the power and the pride of our LOPD community. At the same time, we have all seen how much we need to progress. The murder of George Floyd was yet another tragic example of the systemic racism and discrimination which exists in our society. Public Defenders have been and will be at the forefront of social change, and our actions have driven public debate and may lead to legislative action in the Special Session next week.

I commit to you all that I, as an individual and your Chief, will continue to look at myself and our agency to improve, to provide the best working environment for all LOPD employees, and the best representation for our clients, who too often bear the brunt of these societal failures. Thank you for using your energy and your voices to make LOPD and New Mexico better.

- Ben

Action

While we as an agency have been looking internally this last week and a half, many of us have also been mobilizing in marches (see pictures on the next few pages) and having urgent and strong conversations with politicians. Our department and employees who participated in the marches got quite a bit of media coverage. And our calls for reform across the state and specifically in Bernalillo County got some traction that has been picked up by other criminal justice partners and community groups.

Reform measures will surely be on the table during next week's Special Session. Governor Lujan-Grisham will set the agenda for the session, which starts on Thursday. The budget will be the principal topic to be considered, which is of course a significant issue for LOPD. In addition, there will likely be legislation requiring body cameras, as well as other pieces of criminal justice related legislation.

Stay tuned!

Santa Fe



Roswell



Ruidoso



Albuquerque



Hobbs



Aztec



Las Cruces





Coronavirus no match for our pride



Pride Month is NOT canceled!! COVID isn't going to shove us back into the closet!! It's important for people to know that there are many ways of supporting the LGBTQIA+ absent the marches and festivities that usually follow. I have already, and will be participating in several more virtual pride events across the country. The virtual events range from town halls, to drag shows, to dance parties. So reach out to your local LGBTQIA+ organization and see how you can show your support :)

And Pride Month this year overlaps with the Black Lives Matter movement. Members of the the LGBTQIA+ community are also oppressed. But it is OK to say "happy Pride." We are still celebrating our pride. We just celebrate after we use our platforms to speak out and fight against the long-standing and systemic oppression.

-Aztec attorney Nicole Hall

I moved to New Mexico, five years ago, at the age of 50. It was the first time in my life I didn't feel like a second class citizen. This was the same year that the Supreme Court decided Obergefell v. Hodges. To me the confluence of these events means that the GLBTQ movement has made significant progress. Now my civil rights focus needs to be spent in alliance with communities of color and all those living in poverty, supporting and fighting for their priorities and agendas.

- Albuquerque attorney Margaret Broenniman



The LGBTQ+ community has made so many strides in their fight for equality in the United States. In June, we recognize those strides while keeping in mind that we still have a long way to go. We celebrate diversity at LOPD and I want to, now, recognize the diversity at LOPD with respect to Pride Month. This should serve as a reminder to us of how strong and courageous our LGBTQ+ community is at LOPD, and to serve as an inspiration to continue to fight for greater equality.

Happy Pride!

-Deputy Chief Jennifer Birmingham