

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New watchdog site publishes repeat-offender case review of 13 New Mexico courtrooms

Judge the Bench tracked 150 prolific defendants and more than 5,000 cases from 2020 through mid-2026; press invited to inspect two public dashboards and 13 courtroom write-ups.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Judge the Bench (judgethebench.com), an independent watchdog project covering the New Mexico judiciary, today published a statewide review of how criminal cases involving the state’s most prolific repeat offenders are closed. The study followed 150 defendants who cycled through New Mexico jails and examined more than 5,000 case outcomes from 2020 through mid-2026.

In 13 courtrooms, a large share of those cases never ended in a conviction, plea, or acquittal. The site ranks those benches by “problematic disposition” rate — cases that did not resolve the charge on the merits. That category includes findings of incompetence, failure to prosecute, notices of nolle prosequi endorsed by the judge, and deferred dismissals.

“Valid reasons can exist in a single file,” the study notes. “The record is about pattern: how often those non-merits endings appear in a given courtroom, and what the featured defendants were charged with next.”

The review is timed to New Mexico’s November 2026 judicial retention election. Some of the judges in the write-ups are seeking another term. Background pages for more than 50 New Mexico judges are also posted on the site.

Thirteen courtrooms highlighted by the study

Ranked by problematic disposition rate among the repeat-offender cases reviewed:

1. Vidalia Chavez, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 79% (34 of 43 cases)
2. Maria I. Dominguez, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 76% (58 of 76)
3. Brittany Maldonado Malott, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 76% (32 of 42)
4. Jill Martinez, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 74% (31 of 42)
5. Christine Rodriguez, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 68% (27 of 40)
6. Manuel Arrieta, Third Judicial District Court — 65% (17 of 26)
7. Douglas Driggers, Third Judicial District Court — 60% (27 of 45)
8. Joshua Sanchez, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court — 55% (42 of 76)
9. Bruce Fox, Second Judicial District Court — 55% (12 of 22)
10. Jennifer Wernersbach, Second Judicial District Court — 50% (6 of 12)
11. James Sanchez, Thirteenth Judicial District Court — 43% (6 of 14)
12. Clara Moran, Second Judicial District Court — 42% (10 of 24)
13. Jarod Hofacket, Sixth Judicial District Court — 41% (9 of 22)

Invitation to the press

Reporters and editors are invited to review the project's two public dashboards, the ranked courtroom cards, and the 13 full judge profiles at <https://judgethebench.com>. Each highlighted profile lists the cases reviewed, how they closed, and, where the record shows it, later charges against the same defendants. A directory of additional judge background pages is at <https://judgethebench.com/judges/>.

Dispositions dashboard — <https://judgethebench.com/dispositions/>

This board isolates the study's non-merit closings — incompetence findings, failure to prosecute, judge-endorsed nolle prosequi, and deferred dismissals. Visitors can filter every chart and the case table by year, non-merit type, jurisdiction, and judge; see counts of unique defendants and later filings; and download the filtered rows as CSV. The page counts those closings only. It does not calculate a judge's rate against every case in that courtroom.

Offenders dashboard — <https://judgethebench.com/offenders/>

This board is the criminal-history view of the same 150 defendants. The default window is cases filed from 2020 through 2026; visitors can switch to all years to include the older record in the file. Charts and a case table show alleged charges, filing year, outcome group, jurisdiction, judge, and the court's original case-outcome text. Metrics include alleged cases in view, defendants in view, non-merit outcomes, and cases still open. Filtered rows can be exported as CSV.

Judges seeking retention in November — <https://judgethebench.com/judges/>

Browse or search through the more than 50 profiles of judges seeking to be elected or retained in November's general election. Visitors can view photos and learn about the background, education, career, and political party of any of the judges found in the profile directory.

See which judges are on your ballot

The site includes easy access to your sample ballot on the "voter portal". The New Mexico Secretary of State's voter portal can show a sample ballot for your address, including judicial races. Viewing your sample ballot is a great way to know which judges you will be asked to vote to elect or retain well in advance of election day.

About Judge the Bench

Judge the Bench describes itself as the New Mexico judiciary's watchdog. The project compiles public court records into searchable profiles and case reviews so voters and reporters can examine how individual courtrooms handle repeat-offender prosecutions. The record is on the site.