

Office of the District Attorney

Towaliga Judicial Circuit
Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties

2020 Annual Report



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OUR MISSION

To seek justice, to act with integrity, and to work with our partner agencies to protect the citizens of the Towaliga Judicial Circuit and the State of Georgia. To prosecute professionally and competently; to treat all people courteously, and respectfully; to advocate for the rights of victims; and above all to make our community a safer place for all of its residents.

OUR DUTIES

- Prosecute all criminal cases in Superior and Juvenile Court through appeal.
- Prosecute all criminal cases in Butts and Lamar County Probate Court.
- Attend and advise Grand Juries.
- Draft indictments, accusations and Grand Jury presentments.
- Draft Juvenile Petitions on delinquency cases.
- Handle Habeas Corpus Cases and Appeals.
- Screen all cases for determination of disposition.
- File and prosecute civil drug asset forfeiture cases.
- Prosecute welfare fraud cases.
- Advise Law Enforcement officials concerning search warrants, etc.
- Review, authorize and monitor Title III wiretaps.
- Verify Local Revenue Bond Issue Petitions.
- Process Detainers and Extraditions of out of state defendants.
- Respond to open records and criminal record Expungement requests.
- Prepare Destruction/Retention Orders for Law Enforcement Agencies.
- Review and process cases for Accountability Court Staffing and Court.
- Review and process cases for Pre-Trial Diversion Program.
- Organize and assist Coroner Inquests.
- Assist crime victims with State Crime Victim Rights and Procedures.
- Chair Child Fatality Review Committee meetings.
- Assist Multi-Disciplinary Team Reviews on Child Abuse Cases.
- Assist Sexual Assault Team Review meetings.

OUR TEAM

In addition to the District Attorney, the Office of the District Attorney has a full time staff of ten prosecuting attorneys, six legal assistants, two investigators, and four victim advocates.

Our office is divided into trial teams that are assigned to individual counties and that handle all cases assigned to their respective courts. Our office handles all misdemeanor and felony cases in the Superior Courts of Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties, all juvenile cases in Juvenile Court of Butts, Lamar and Monroe Counties, and all criminal cases in the Probate Courts of Butts and Lamar Counties.

Throughout 2019, our office experienced a tremendous amount of growth and change. We welcomed a new Animal Crimes Special Prosecutor, a new Assistant District Attorney, and two new legal assistants.

Our goal is to ensure we have an outstanding team of professionals working to ensure justice for our community.



The Butts County team members are (L-R): Lorraine Bunn, Jessica Rock, Cayce Ingalls, James Moss, Michelle Williams, Greg Futch, Dianne Miner, Bonita Lynn, and Paul Hemmann.



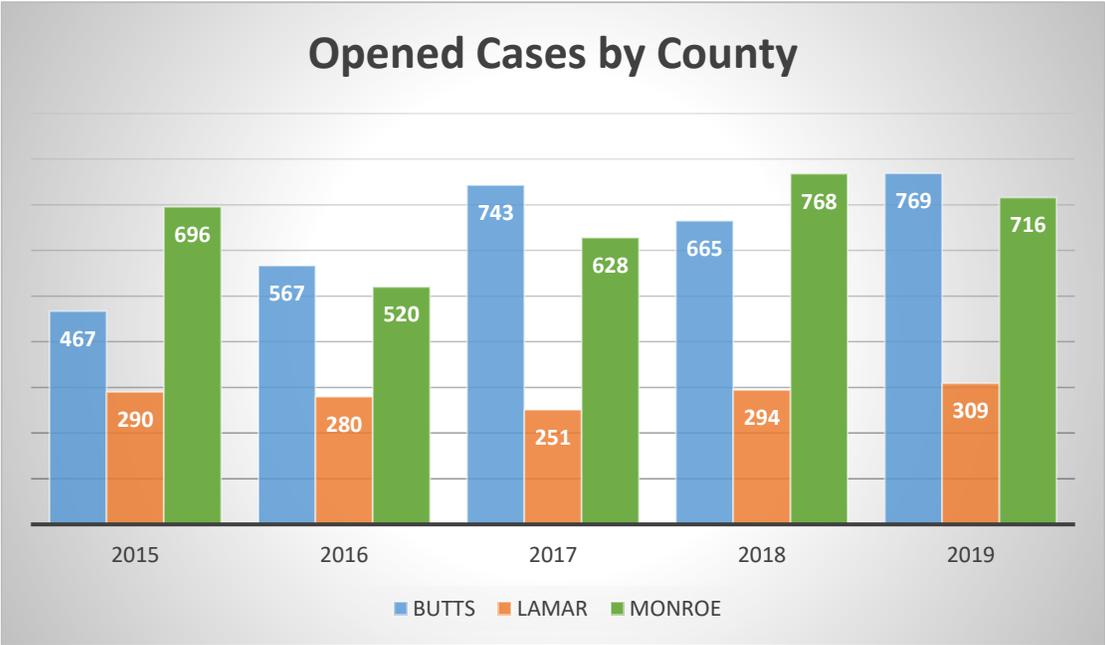
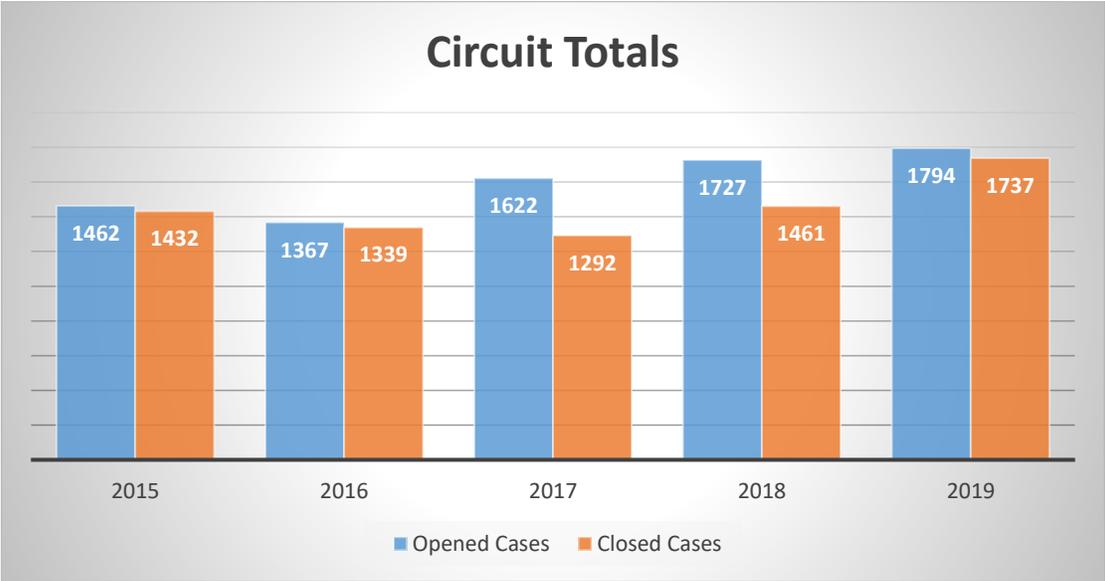
The Lamar County team members are: Katelyn Raybun, Cindy Adams, Caroline Storey, and Anita Howard.



The Monroe County team members are: Elizabeth Presley, Fran Norris, Sarah Young, Carolee Jordan, Rachel Miner, Allison Howard, Morgan Andrews, Donna Ruffin, Greg Guest, and Leslie Tilson.

OUR CASES

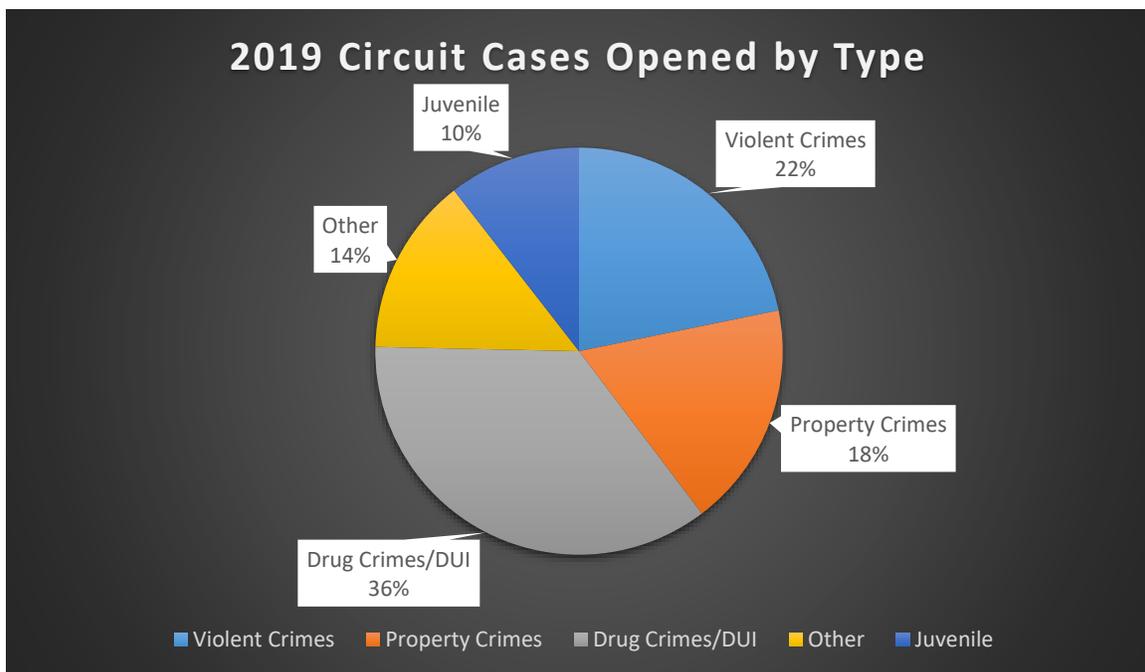
In 2019, we opened 1,794 cases for prosecution and closed 1737 cases. The data in this report only reflects criminal cases resulting in arrests. Our current open caseload is 1,853 cases which results in an average of 206 open cases for our nine line prosecutors.



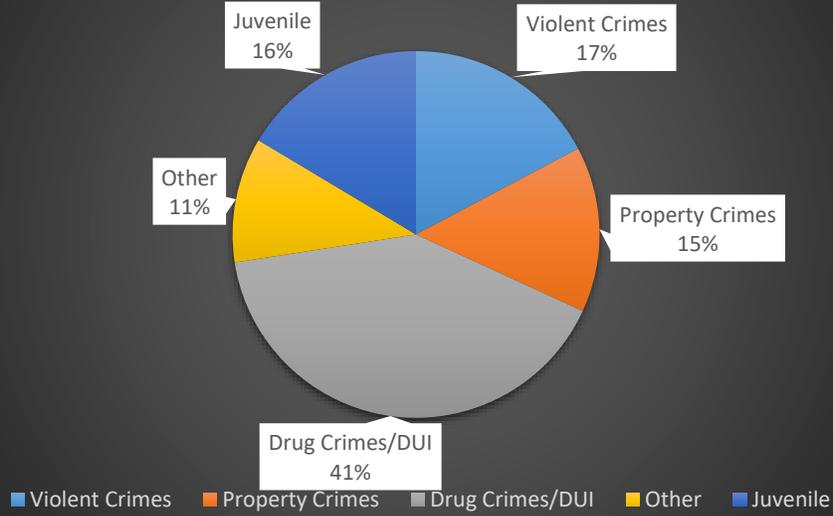
CASES OPENED BY TYPE

This chart demonstrates the majority of cases received in our office are either Drug Crimes or DUI/Traffic. There is a need for us to take a multi-pronged approach to Drug and Alcohol prosecution. We will work closely with law enforcement to ensure we target dealers and to ensure stiff punishment. We will also increase our efforts with the Accountability Courts to address the issues of addiction.

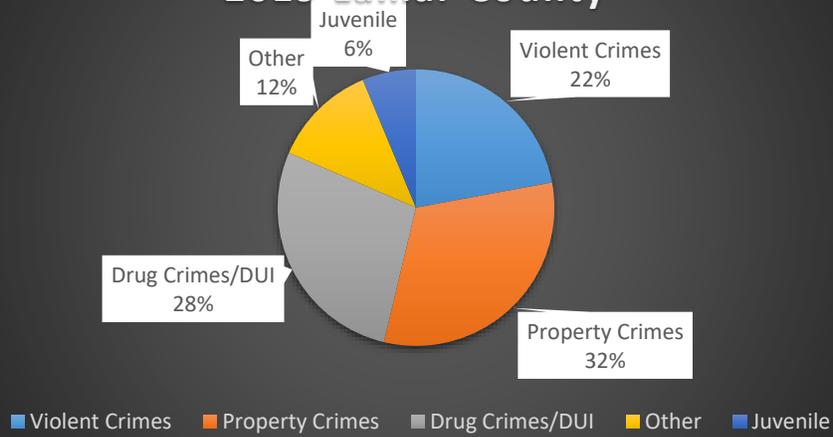
The chart below illustrates the caseload by percentage of cases being opened in the Office of the District Attorney in 2019. Our tracking instrument does not collect data from juvenile court or probation revocations sufficient to break down the types of cases. However, they involve all manner of violations, from simple technical issues with the compliance to newly committed offenses.



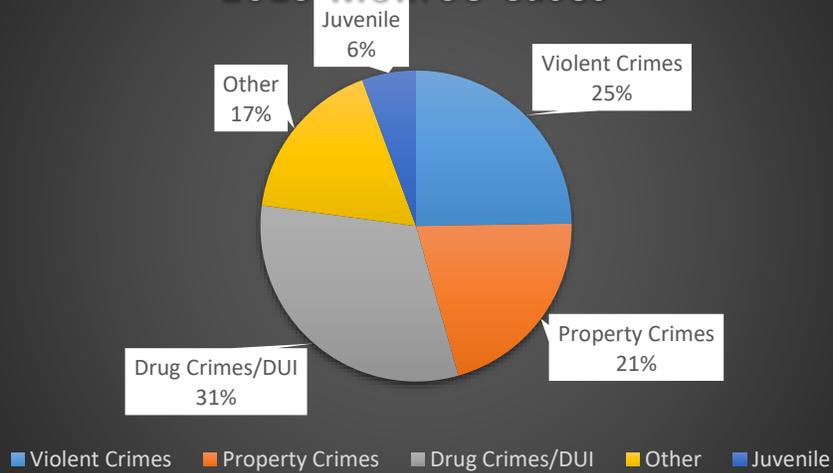
2019 Butts County Opened by Type



2019 Lamar County



2019 Monroe Cases



OUR WORK - BUILDING CASES

Team Work Improves Investigations

Our prosecutors and investigators are on call and available to law enforcement 24/7. Particularly in serious violent felony cases against adults and children or other complex cases, upon request, our prosecutors will provide legal advice regarding search warrants, interviews of suspects or whether additional evidence would be required to prove a case in court.

Grand Jury

After an arrest, warrants are forwarded to the Office of the District Attorney for prosecution. Our investigator then requests reports and additional follow-up from law enforcement as well as acquiring additional needed information, such as medical reports, scientific testing results or additional witness statements. Once our prosecutors determine a case is ready for formal charges to be lodged, they draft indictments in cases requiring Grand Jury review or accusations in cases statutorily permitted to be charged by the State. The majority of cases passing through the Office of the District Attorney are presented to the Grand Jury where citizens who have been selected for the Grand Jury hear evidence and determine whether probable cause exists and then issue a True Bill (meaning there is sufficient evidence for probable cause) or a No Bill (meaning lack of evidence or probable cause).

Trial

The majority of cases in the criminal justice system are resolved by guilty pleas when defendants accept responsibility for their crimes. When a defendant declines to plead guilty, we provide a trial by jury which can take place every quarter. This year our office worked hard to ensure we were ready to try multiple criminal cases throughout the year.

NEW INITIATIVES

This year our office began working in a new direction with several new initiatives which are committed to better serving a safer community.

Animal Crimes Prosecution and Training

Through a generous grant aimed at reducing animal abuse state-wide our office hired a new prosecutor to train and prosecute animal cruelty cases in our circuit and throughout the state.

Jessica Rock is an Assistant District Attorney with the Towaliga Judicial Circuit and the Georgia Statewide Animal Crimes Prosecutor and Trainer, only the 3rd of this kind in the nation. She provides statewide animal crime (animal cruelty and dogfighting) case assistance for law enforcement and prosecutors. She also provides statewide and national training to law enforcement, animal control officers, prosecutors, judges and veterinarians on a variety of topics. These topics include animal abuse cases from the crime scene to the courtroom, dogfighting investigations and prosecutions and the link between animal abuse, interpersonal violence, and other collateral crimes.

Citizen's Advisory Council

We are creating a working group to form a Citizen's Advisory Council for the Office of the District Attorney. The council will provide citizens the opportunity to learn about the criminal justice process and to effectively collaborate with the members of District Attorney's Office and community leaders. The primary goal is to help build and strengthen relationships between the community and the District Attorney's Office in an effort to make our community a safer place.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Annual Event

In honor and commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week our office hosted our first annual Community Awareness event and service in honor and memory of crime victims, the theme of which was "Honoring our Past and a Call for Hope." We thank our Victim Services Director, Lorraine Bunn, whose hard work and dedicated planning brought this inspiring event to fruition. We also especially thank our victim families who were in attendance, our law enforcement partners who supported us, and all of our program participants who made this outstanding event so meaningful.

Community Outreach

Our goal is to ensure the community knows of the work going on to keep them safe. It can take months and years until a case is solved and resolved in court so it is important to keep the public informed with all the information possible.

Additionally, we want a place in which victims can understand their rights in the criminal justice system and apply for every available resource.

Our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/towaligada](https://www.facebook.com/towaligada)



Our website at towaligada.com





The Towaliga Judicial Circuit was proud to be a part of the 5th annual memorial ride in honor of Monroe County Deputy Michael Norris. This year's ride gave a heartfelt shout out to all emergency medical personnel and first responders, a very special attendee at the year's event aboard Navicent's life flight unit, was one of the members of Michael's trauma team. The District Attorney's Office deeply appreciates the dedication and hard work of all our emergency public safety partners.



Our victim advocates are fortunate to attend the annual Georgia Commission on Family Violence 25th Annual Conference with Monroe County CARE Cottage.



This year the District Attorney's Office celebrated with and honored Linda Watts, long time office manager for our office, as she began her retirement journey! She will be missed, but we wish her all the best as she embraces all the new episodes in her life.



Our office is glad to lend assistance to the annual Shoot for the Blue fundraiser for the families of fallen law enforcement officers. Big shout out to Investigators Chad Payne and Tim Clift of the Lamar County Sheriff's Office who organized and cooked, and to everyone who came out to shoot, making this year's event a huge success.



Prosecutors, law enforcement, and victim services professionals gathered for Domestic Violence Training Day hosted by the Towaliga District Attorney's Office. Prosecuting Attorney's Council Sharla Jackson shared best practices for case building and report writing, and PAC's Will Johnson provided information about domestic violence in elder and disabled populations.



District Attorney Jonathan Adams speaking at a local Kiwanis Club.

Our ultimate goal is for our community to be a safe place to live, work, and play. There is no one solution to addressing crime in our community. It is a dynamic and changing landscape in which we have to address both defendants and victims as individuals. Our intention is to remove extremely violent individuals and sexual predators from our society through incarceration, but we also recognize that many defendants have the potential to live productive and fruitful lives if core issues with mental health and addiction are properly addressed. Our best work is performed when we collaborate with our partners such as law enforcement, community leaders, church leaders and school leaders. It is a genuine pleasure to be a voice for victims in our community and I look forward to our continued progress as your District Attorney.

-District Attorney Jonathan Adams