

AG announces \$605K judgements in Meth Money Laundering Case

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Alamogordo, NM – Attorney General Hector Balderas announced March 28 that an Alamogordo judge, the Honorable James W. Counts, assessed \$605,000 in penalties against brothers Joe and Robert Chavez, nicknamed “the AZ Boys”, who ran a meth-trafficking operation between New Mexico and Arizona.

In 2014, both were convicted at trial of felonies including racketeering, conspiracy, drug trafficking, and multiple counts each of money laundering. The Office of the Attorney General jointly prosecuted these criminal cases with the Twelfth Judicial District Attorney’s Office.

The civil penalties, sought by the Office of the Attorney General, are believed to be the first ever assessed in New Mexico following money laundering convictions.

“We are attacking criminal enterprises and money laundering on all fronts in New Mexico, both criminal and civil,” Balderas said. “The Office of the Attorney General maintains an aggressive anti-money laundering initiative funded by the Southwest Border Alliance and we will continue to root out money laundering operations and associated crimes in our state.”

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New Mexico's money laundering statute, NMSA 1978, Section 30-51-4 (1998), provides that anyone convicted of money laundering is subject to a civil penalty of three times the value of the property involved in the crime.

In December 2014, following the Chavez criminal convictions, the Office of the Attorney General filed civil complaints asking the Honorable James W. Counts to assess those penalties. Late last week, Judge Counts granted summary judgment for the State of New Mexico in these matters, assessing a penalty against Joe in the amount of \$479,759.25 and against Robert in the amount of \$125,400.00.

Both Joe and Robert Chavez are currently incarcerated in the Department of Corrections as a result of their 2012 convictions. Joe Chavez is also currently facing unrelated first-degree murder charges in Otero County.