

# NEWS RELEASE

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**R. Andrew Murray**  
District Attorney

**January 9, 2012**

## **Andrew Murray, Elected District Attorney, Marks First Year with Collection of Successes**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Andrew Murray was elected Mecklenburg County's District Attorney (DA) in November 2010 and took office on January 1, 2011. Mr. Murray, as the DA for Mecklenburg County, is responsible for prosecuting, on behalf of the State, all crimes and traffic offenses that occur within the County. He also has the statutory duty of advising law enforcement agencies within the County with respect to criminal matters. He hires and supervises over eighty (80) Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs) who assist him in carrying out his duties as the DA.

Mr. Murray's goal for years had been to become the DA for Mecklenburg County upon the retirement of Peter Gilchrist who had been the DA for thirty-six (36) years. Because he had begun his legal career as an Assistant District Attorney in Mecklenburg County, had practiced criminal law as a defense attorney in the County upon leaving the DA's Office, and had felt an obligation to return to public service as the elected DA, Mr. Murray had tremendous insight into the court system as a whole and the DA's Office in particular. That has helped him move quickly to improve the DA's Office, to strengthen ties with local and State law enforcement partners, to advocate for support from both State and local government, and, most importantly, to protect the citizens of Mecklenburg County by providing vigorous, fair prosecution of criminals.

Besides his experience as a prosecutor, as a lawyer in private practice, and as the managing partner of his law firm, Mr. Murray brought the experience he gained as a Commander in the United States Coast Guard to bear on an office that needed an infusion of energy and focus. Mr. Murray immediately made important changes in leadership, policy and overall direction that have significantly benefited the Office and the community. The results of those changes are evidenced by measurable gains in the number of homicide cases tried and murderers convicted, in the number of habitual felons sent to prison, and in overall courtroom utilization.

Communication and collaboration with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, elected officials, and community groups were key factors in many of the positive changes of the Murray administration in its first year. Some of those positive changes and key accomplishments include:

- In his first weeks in office, Mr. Murray and his Deputy DA personally visited each of the municipal Chiefs of Police in Mecklenburg County in their respective offices to discuss how to best work together and open direct and positive lines of communication.

- Mr. Murray and his prosecutors meet often with the command staffs of all local law enforcement agencies.
- Regular meetings take place between the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's (CMPD) Homicide Division and the DA's Office Homicide Prosecution Team as well as between the sexual assault and child protection detectives and the respective teams of prosecutors that specialize in those prosecutions.
- The DA's Office becomes involved with cases at an earlier stage now that the District Attorney or a member of the DA's Office Homicide Prosecution Team responds with homicide detectives to every murder scene, as well as when assistant district attorneys meet with law enforcement agencies across the County to consult about cases and to work with detectives and officers early in investigations.
- Representatives of felony prosecution teams meet regularly with CMPD officers who manage the Priority Offender Strategy Team (POST), a CMPD initiative designed to focus resources on the most dangerous and active criminals. Similar efforts exist between law enforcement and the DA's Office in all municipalities in the County.
- Prosecutors made presentations to law enforcement officers throughout Mecklenburg County to improve the quality of investigations and to increase our shared successes in the courtroom.
- Many local police chiefs and their staffs attended a leadership presentation hosted by Mr. Murray that featured General (Ret.) Dan K. McNeill, Former Commander of US/Coalition/International Forces in Afghanistan. The presentation was part of a two-day training session given in collaboration with CMPD which featured top prosecutors from across the United States. These nationally recognized speakers offered important instruction to prosecutors as part of the Office's commitment to excellence.
- In an effort to preserve the gains in personnel and resources available to his Office, Mr. Murray worked throughout the year to advocate for the needs of the County. Armed with measurable successes, Mr. Murray met many times with elected officials and staffs of Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, the N.C. General Assembly, and the Administrative Office of the Courts. He was able to avoid cuts in funding of the DA's Office in spite of such a difficult budget year. His efforts also resulted in him being allowed to fill previously frozen ADA and Support Staff positions that were vital to the efficient prosecution of cases. He continues to fight for adequate funding of the DA's Office and is grateful for the assistance of the City, County and State in achieving that goal.
- A Special Assistant U.S. Attorney grant position was obtained through the Governor's Crime Commission with the cooperation of CMPD. This grant allowed a veteran Mecklenburg County ADA to be assigned to work with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte. This veteran prosecutor now coordinates efforts between the DA's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office to take more Mecklenburg County cases involving guns and violence into Federal Court. This partnership cements the long standing relationship

that these two organizations have enjoyed in years past and means real coordination in the efforts between the two prosecutorial agencies.

- Mr. Murray's experience as an attorney and Coast Guard Commander has taught him the importance of strong relationships with everyone involved in a case or crisis. He continues to emphasize to his staff that treating everyone with respect and professional courtesy is a core value of his Office. He has clearly set out his expectation that every member of his Office will listen carefully to victims, officers, defense attorneys and others in order to keep lines of communication open and to include information from them in their decision-making process on each case.
- Mr. Murray organized a group of twenty-four (24) ADAs, who in addition to their regular courtroom duties, serve as representatives from his Office to attend community meetings which are generally held in the evenings. The purpose of this group of attorneys is to listen to the concerns of the community and to respond to their needs. By staffing the group with experienced prosecutors, Mr. Murray made sure his representatives could accurately inform community members about the law of North Carolina and the ability of the Office to respond to specific needs.
- Mr. Murray also expanded the DA's Office website that provides information about the Office, the results of trial weeks, and the results of arraignment courts where guilty pleas are handled. The website also has an email subscription service available to those in the community that are interested in the weekly reports generated by the Office. The website is available to the public at: **charmekda.com**

Additionally, as the leader of the largest DA's Office in the State, Mr. Murray is responsible for nearly 130 attorneys and support staff personnel. At the very beginning of his administration, Mr. Murray met with his staff and provided a clear set of goals and initiatives that would bring about changes in the operation of his Office:

- One of the immediate changes in the DA's Office was the establishment of a new leadership team. Mr. Murray's new leadership team was charged with executing his goals and vision, which included a focus on prosecuting gun crimes, resolving homicide cases more efficiently and effectively, focusing on habitual felons, keeping criminals off the streets by seeking higher bond amounts and punishing criminals who commit residential break-ins. To achieve those goals, Mr. Murray established a clear command structure, and has demanded accountability from this leadership team.
- As a measure of the success his administration has had in these areas, it's important to look at real results:
  - In 2011, the Homicide Prosecution Team resolved 97 cases. This is a 62% increase in cases resolved over the past five-year average. The Homicide Prosecution Team tried 14 cases in 2011; this is a 61% increase over the past five-year average. In addition, the prison sentences for defendants convicted of murder have increased for cases resolved in 2011.
  - In 2011, the Habitual Felon Team (HFT) convicted 345 felons and sent them all to prison. This 35% increase, from 2010, of criminals sent to prison by the HFT is a

result of Mr. Murray's efforts to increase the allotted courtroom time for the HFT, as well as his increase in the number of prosecutors and staff assigned to the HFT.

- New prosecution groups were established to meet the growing challenges of probation revocation hearings, domestic violence prosecutions and Superior Court prosecutions of DWI defendants.
- Mr. Murray moved experienced prosecutors to positions throughout the Office to make sure that veteran prosecutors were on every team and, thus, available to less experienced attorneys for mentoring and guidance.
- New computer resources were brought online through close cooperation with the State. The DA's Office now has a case management system in the final stages of development and installation to more accurately track the progress of cases in the Office.

As Mr. Murray looks forward to the second year of his administration, the guiding principles will continue to be "Excellence" and "Integrity." Excellence in prosecution means being prepared, knowing the law, and seeking justice. Integrity means making choices based on what the law requires, what the facts support and what justice demands.

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