

DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03

VENANGO COUNTY

EXAMINATION REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011



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**Department of the Auditor General
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-0018**

**JACK WAGNER
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements (Statement) of District Court 28-3-03, Venango County, Pennsylvania (District Court), for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(c). This Statement is the responsibility of the District Court's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on this Statement based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. An examination includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the Statement and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our examination provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code* to audit the accounts of each district court to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*.



Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

In our opinion, the Statement referred to above presents, in all material respects, the operations of the District Court as it pertains to receipts made on behalf of the Commonwealth for the period ended December 31, 2011, in conformity with the criteria set forth in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report findings of significant deficiencies in internal control, violations of provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that are material to the Statement and any fraud and illegal acts that are more than inconsequential that come to our attention during our examination. We are also required to obtain the views of management on those matters. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the internal control over reporting on the Statement or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

A control deficiency exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a control deficiency, or combination of control deficiencies, that adversely affects the District Court's ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report data reliably in accordance with the applicable criteria such that there is more than a remote likelihood that a misstatement of the District Court's Statement that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the District Court's internal control.

A material weakness is a significant deficiency or combination of significant deficiencies that results in more than a remote likelihood that a material misstatement of the Statement will not be prevented or detected by the District Court's internal control.

Our consideration of internal control over reporting on the Statement was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. We did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses, as defined above, in internal control over reporting on the Statement.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and the District Court and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Wagner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

August 24, 2012

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General



DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03
VENANGO COUNTY
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	183,359
Motor Carrier Road Tax Fines		50
Overweight Fines		14,680
Commercial Driver Fines		1,500
Littering Law Fines		300
Child Restraint Fines		325
Department of Revenue Court Costs		99,867
Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs		23,088
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		16,558
Domestic Violence Costs		6,610
Department of Agriculture Fines		1,657
Emergency Medical Service Fines		43,936
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		138,730
Judicial Computer System Fees		49,308
Access to Justice Fees		13,227
Criminal Justice Enhancement Account Fees		2,069
Judicial Computer Project Surcharges		9,446
Constable Service Surcharges		2,947
Miscellaneous State Fines		14,605
		<hr/>
Total receipts (Note 2)		622,262
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 3)		<hr/> (622,262)
Balance due Commonwealth (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4)		-
Examination adjustments		<hr/> -
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (District Court) for the period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011	\$	<hr/> <hr/> -

Notes to the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03
VENANGO COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011

1. Criteria

The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements provides a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The Statement was prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

2. Receipts

Receipts are comprised of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These fines, costs, fees, and surcharges represent collections made on traffic, non-traffic, civil, and criminal cases filed with the District Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

District Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ <u>622,262</u>
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4. Balance Due Commonwealth (District Court) For The Period January 1, 2009 To December 31, 2011

This balance reflects the summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue.

5. Magisterial District Judges Serving During Examination Period

Michael L. Fedora, Senior Judge served at District Court 28-3-03 for the period January 1, 2009 to August 18, 2009.

Michael D. Snyder served at District Court 28-3-03 for the period August 19, 2009 to December 31, 2011.

DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03
VENANGO COUNTY
OBSERVATION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011

Observation - Improper Assessment Of Costs

Our examinations of the Venango County District Courts revealed that the courts were assessing a \$5 flat rate postage fee to cover the additional administrative costs related to mailing miscellaneous mailers on summary traffic and nontraffic cases as outlined in a President Judge Order signed on November 12, 2003. This Administrative Order authorized Venango County District Courts to assess this cost on all summary and non traffic cases when the defendant had to be mailed notices for a Request For Suspension Of Operating Privileges (DL-38), Impending Warrant, or for failure to make a required payment on fines, costs and/or restitution.

Because the Judicial Code (42 Pa.C.S.A. § 1725.1) provides an itemized list of expenses to be paid for the various causes of action, and it carves out exceptions for the postage costs and which party shall pay the postage costs, Venango County should be charging the proper party with actual postage costs, and not a blanket postage charge of \$5 to defendants. Actual postage costs are known the moment documents are mailed and, therefore, are easily attainable and billable to the proper party to a cause of action.

On March 31, 2010, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled “that only actual mailing costs shall be imposed against a defendant.”

Recommendations

We recommend that the district court discontinue assessing the above-cited fee. We further recommend that district court assess fees and costs as intended by the appropriate state statutes.

Management’s Response

The Venango County District Court Administrator advised that the Order establishing this cost was rescinded in 2012.

DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03
VENANGO COUNTY
COMMENT
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Comment - Compliance With Prior Examination Recommendation

During our prior examination, we recommended that there is evidence that the Magisterial District Judge authorized the disposition of traffic and non-traffic cases.

During our current examination, we noted that the office complied with our recommendation.

DISTRICT COURT 28-3-03
VENANGO COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2009 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable Zygmunt Pines
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable Michael D. Snyder	Magisterial District Judge
The Honorable Timothy S. Brooks	Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners
Ms. Lynn Cummings-Wilson	District Court Administrator

This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. To view this report online or to contact the Department of the Auditor General, please access our web site at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us.