

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Clerk of the Court of Common
Pleas/Prothonotary/
Clerk of Orphans' Court
Columbia County, Pennsylvania
For the Period
January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021

December 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
Twitter: @PAAuditorGen
www.PaAuditor.gov**

**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary/Clerk of Orphans' Court, Columbia County, Pennsylvania (County Officer), for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021, pursuant to the requirements of Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(b) and § 401(d).

The objective of the audit was to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted and to provide a report to the Department of Revenue to allow the Department of Revenue to state and settle the County Officer's accounts. Our audit was limited to areas related to the objective identified above and was not conducted, nor was it required to be, in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

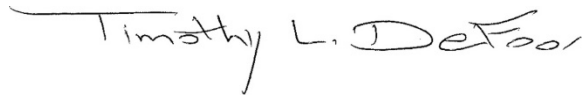
The County Officer is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. The County Officer is also responsible for complying with those laws and regulations. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021, the County Officer, in all significant respects, complied with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted.

This report includes summaries of the County Officer's receipts and disbursements of funds collected on behalf of the Commonwealth (summaries). We obtained data representing the County Officer's receipts and disbursements from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, which obtains data from each of the Commonwealth's clerk of court of common pleas, prothonotary and clerk of orphans' courts offices, and used the data to create the summaries in the format required by the Department of Revenue. We also obtain data relating to prothonotaries from the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. We also evaluated the accuracy of the data as part of our audit to conclude on the County Officer's compliance with certain state laws and regulations as described in the previous paragraph. Any adjustments that we considered necessary based on our audit work are disclosed in the *Audit Adjustments* line of the summaries; however, the scope of our audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of the amounts reported in the summaries.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. This report is not suitable for any other purposes.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the County Officer. We appreciate the courtesy extended by the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary/Clerk of Orphans' Court, Columbia County, to us during the course of our audit. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
November 10, 2022

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CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/
PROTHONOTARY/CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
COLUMBIA COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

The Department of Auditor General is mandated by Article IV, Section 401(b) and (d) of *The Fiscal Code* (Act of April 9, 1929, P.L.343, No. 176), to audit the accounts of each county officer to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted.

Clerk of Court of Common Pleas 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 summary and criminal cases filed with the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas' Office.

Prothonotary receipts are comprised of taxes, surcharges, and fees collected on behalf of the Department of Revenue and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. These include monies collected for the following taxes, surcharges, and fees:

- Writ Taxes of \$.50 or \$.25 imposed on taxable instruments filed with the Prothonotary.
- Divorce Complaint Surcharges of \$10 imposed on all divorce decrees.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees of \$40.25 imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts.
- Protection From Abuse Surcharges of \$100 imposed against defendants when a protection order is granted as a result of a hearing. Protection From Abuse Contempt Fines of not less than \$300 nor more than \$1,000 imposed against a defendant who is found to be in violation of a protection from abuse order.
- Criminal Charge Information System Fees imposed on all custody cases. Of the fee imposed, 80% is payable to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) and 20% is payable to the County in which the action took place. The statement of receipts and disbursements only reflects the portion collected on behalf of the AOPC.

CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/
 PROTHONOTARY/CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 COLUMBIA COUNTY
 BACKGROUND
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Clerk of Orphans' Court receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include monies collected for the following taxes, surcharges, and fees:

- Marriage License Tax of \$.50 on all marriage licenses filed with the Clerk of Orphans' Court.
- Marriage License Application Surcharge of \$10 imposed on all marriage license applications.
- The Marriage License Declaration Fees of \$13 imposed for the issuance of a marriage license or declaration of which the Commonwealth's portion is \$10.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees of \$40.25 imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts.

Total disbursements during the audit period are comprised as follows

Clerk Of The Court Of Common Pleas

Clerk of the Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 1,135,693
State Police	539
Office of Inspector General	107
Total	\$ 1,136,339

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance also reflects a summary of any receipts disbursed directly to other state agencies.

CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/
PROTHONOTARY/CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
COLUMBIA COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Prothonotary

Prothonotary checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 157,436
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts	<u>2,935</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 160,371</u></u>

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance also reflects a summary of receipts disbursed directly to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts.

Clerk Of Orphans' Court

Clerk of Orphans' Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	<u><u>\$ 47,772</u></u>
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This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue.

Barbara Silveti served as the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary/Clerk of Orphans' Court for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021.

The summaries of receipts and disbursements provide a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of fines, costs, fees, taxes, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The summaries were 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.

CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
COLUMBIA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	51,905
Overweight Fines		999
Department of Revenue Court Costs		53,852
Crime Victims' Compensation Costs		111,214
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		78,783
Domestic Violence Costs		13,912
Emergency Medical Services Fines		5,811
DUI - ARD/EMS Fees		12,100
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		13,168
Judicial Computer System/Access to Justice Fees		119,981
Offender Supervision Fees		245,915
Constable Service Surcharges		9
Criminal Laboratory Users' Fees		34,173
Probation and Parole Officers' Firearm Education Costs		10,964
Substance Abuse Education Costs		72,019
Office of Victims' Services Costs		31,316
Miscellaneous State Fines and Costs		<u>280,218</u>
 Total receipts		 1,136,339
 Disbursements to Commonwealth		 <u>(1,136,339)</u>
 Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports		 -
 Audit adjustments		 <u>-</u>
 Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021	 \$	 <u><u>-</u></u>

PROTHONOTARY
COLUMBIA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Receipts:

Writ Taxes	\$	1,515
Divorce Complaint Surcharges		6,540
Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees		148,694
Protection From Abuse Surcharges and Contempt Fines		733
Criminal Charge Information System Fees		<u>2,935</u>
Total Receipts		160,417
Commissions		<u>(46)</u>
Net Receipts		160,371
Disbursements to Commonwealth		<u>(160,371)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports		-
Audit adjustments		<u>-</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021	\$	<u><u>-</u></u>

CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
COLUMBIA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Receipts:

Marriage License Taxes	\$	799
Marriage License Application Surcharges		15,980
Marriage License Declaration Fees		15,980
Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees		<u>15,013</u>
Total Receipts		47,772
Disbursements to Commonwealth		<u>(47,772)</u>
Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports		-
Audit adjustments		<u>-</u>
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021	\$	<u><u>-</u></u>

CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/
PROTHONOTARY/CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
COLUMBIA COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable H. Geoffrey Moulton, Jr.
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

Mr. Thomas J. Dougherty
Director
Division of Grants and Standards
Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

The Honorable Barbara Silveti
Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/
Prothonotary/Clerk of Orphans' Court

The Honorable Gary E. Norton
President Judge

The Honorable Chris E. Young
Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.