

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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

January 2023



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Pat Browne
Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary, Indiana 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 and prothonotary 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 Offices' 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, Indiana 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
December 22, 2022

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CLERK OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/
PROTHONOTARY
INDIANA 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, fees, and fines 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
INDIANA COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

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	\$ 1,992,107
Department of Transportation	<u>3,214</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 1,995,321</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 any receipts disbursed directly to other state agencies.

Prothonotary

Prothonotary checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 181,907
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts	<u>2,557</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 184,464</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 that were disbursed directly to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts.

Randy Degenkolb served as the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary 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
INDIANA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	241,483
Department of Revenue Court Costs		62,525
Crime Victims' Compensation Costs		139,391
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		96,349
Domestic Violence Costs		10,831
Emergency Medical Services Fines		14,766
DUI - ARD/EMS Fees		18,572
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		13,609
Judicial Computer System/Access to Justice Fees		101,650
Offender Supervision Fees		413,007
Constable Service Surcharges		323
Criminal Laboratory Users' Fees		259,311
Probation and Parole Officers' Firearm Education Costs		12,544
Substance Abuse Education Costs		89,589
Office of Victims' Services Costs		18,444
Miscellaneous State Fines and Costs		<u>502,927</u>
 Total receipts		 1,995,321
 Disbursements to Commonwealth		 <u>(1,995,321)</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
INDIANA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Receipts:

Writ Taxes	\$	2,174
Divorce Complaint Surcharges		7,100
Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees		172,698
Criminal Charge Information System Fees		<u>2,557</u>
Total Receipts		184,529
Commissions		<u>(65)</u>
Net Receipts		184,464
Disbursements to Commonwealth		<u>(184,464)</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
INDIANA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF PRIOR AUDIT RECOMMENDATION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Summary Of Prior Audit Recommendation

During our prior audit, we recommended that the office:

- Review the laws to ensure that Criminal Charge Information System Fees are assessed as mandated by law.

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

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

This report was initially distributed to:

Pat Browne
Acting 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 Randy Degenkolb
Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary

The Honorable R. Michael Keith
Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

The Honorable Thomas M. Bianco, Esq.
President Judge

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.