



## State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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### **Former Sex Offender Registry Officer in Bedford County Took More Than \$30,000 in Public Funds**

A woman formerly charged with making sure sex offenders in Bedford County were properly registered and monitored took more than \$31,000 in sex offender registration fees over six years for her own personal use, an investigation by the Comptroller's office has found.

Under Tennessee law, convicted sex offenders are required to register with the local law enforcement agencies in their home communities and also report any changes of address. The information provided through that process is maintained on a statewide database of sex offenders.

To cover the administrative expenses required to maintain the database, each sex offender is required to pay an annual fee, which is now set at \$150. A portion of the collected fees are used by the local law enforcement agencies, while the rest are forwarded to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

The Comptroller's investigation, which is detailed in a report released today, examined the operations of the Bedford County Sheriff's Department's sex offender registry office from 2006 through 2011.

During that time period, investigators determined that at least 158 sex offenders should have paid fees totaling \$42,198. However, the former registry officer, Rebecca Hord, only turned over \$10,738 to the sheriff's department – keeping at least \$31,460 for herself. (Because of incomplete recordkeeping, investigators say the total number of offenders and the amount of missing fees could actually have been higher.)

The Comptroller's investigation was conducted in coordination with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

Investigators also concluded that Hord had forged the sheriff's signature on some documents declaring some sex offenders to be indigent. And investigators said the department didn't provide adequate oversight over the sex offender registry program because it failed to follow up when offenders weren't paying fees and didn't require offenders to report to the department in person.

Hord was indicted by the Bedford County Grand Jury on charges of theft, forgery and official misconduct earlier this week.

"Some people might not be concerned about the loss of these fees paid by convicted sex offenders, but they should be," Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. "For public safety, it's extremely important that we have mechanisms in place to track sex offenders after they are released from prison. The sex offender registration fees are supposed to cover the cost of that monitoring effort. So to the extent those fees aren't available, money from other sources might need to be used to cover those expenses. I commend the work of our investigators and those from the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation on this case."

Results of the investigative report can be viewed online at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

If you suspect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds in Tennessee, call the Comptroller's toll-free hotline at 1-800-232-5454 or file a report online at: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/shared/safwa.asp>.

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Media contact: Blake Fontenay, Communications Director, (615) 253-2668 or [blake.fontenay@tn.gov](mailto:blake.fontenay@tn.gov)

[Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury](#)  
State Capitol Nashville, TN 37243  
Phone: (615) 741-2501  
Email: [comptroller.web@cot.tn.gov](mailto:comptroller.web@cot.tn.gov)