



State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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Former Fentress County Library Director Took Public Funds for Private Use

The former director of the Fentress County Library pocketed more than \$40,000 in public money to cover her own personal expenses, an investigation by the state Comptroller's office has found.

Investigators determined that Leslie Pullins used a variety of schemes to take money from the library over a period that lasted nearly three and a half years.

These included:

- Taking cash collected by the library for late book return fines, copying and faxing fees, donations and other revenue;
- Using the library's debit card to make unauthorized automatic teller machine withdrawals;
- Receiving cash back when depositing money into the library's bank account;
- Using library funds to repay a personal loan from a family member; and
- Taking money that had been collected by library employees on behalf of the Fentress County Historical Society.

Investigators noted that during the same period, Ms. Pullins apparently deposited \$7,000 of her own money into the library account.

Investigators concluded that there were inadequate safeguards in place to detect that money was being misappropriated. Best practices in the accounting industry suggest that no single employee should be able to process all aspects of a financial transaction. When multiple employees are involved, that allows them to verify each other's work.

The investigators also found that county library board members didn't provide adequate oversight for the use of debit cards. Several library board directors indicated that they were unaware that a debit card had been issued for the library's bank account.

The full investigative report, which was released today, is available online at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

"Money collected by government institutions – whether it is property tax money, traffic ticket revenues or fines from overdue library books – is still public money and it needs to be treated as such," Comptroller Justin P.

Wilson said. “It’s very disappointing when someone in a position of public trust violates that trust. Government institutions can reduce the likelihood of that occurring by following sound principles for handling and accounting for public dollars.”

Pullins was indicted by the Fentress County Grand Jury this month on multiple counts of theft, forgery and official misconduct.

If you suspect fraud, waste or abuse of public money in Tennessee, you may call the Comptroller’s hot line at 1-800-232-5454 or fill out a report online at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/shared/safwa.asp>.

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