



Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller

August 23, 2017

Former Oneida Special School District Food Service Director Indicted for Theft

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has found that Verna Wright, the former Food Service Director for the Oneida Special School District (OSSD) in Scott County, misappropriated at least \$60,532 in school funds.

The OSSD Director of Schools notified the Comptroller's Office after becoming concerned about unusual purchases made using food service funds.

School district officials allowed Wright to use her personal credit cards to make purchases and pay the balances with food service funds. Investigators determined Wright made numerous purchases with school funds that did not benefit OSSD's food service operations or the school district in general.

Fraudulent purchases included eight computers, three iPads, eight iPods, and more than 110 phone cases and decorations for Samsung cell phones. Wright also used over \$2,500 to purchase more than 65 Vera Bradley designer bags.

In April 2017, Verna Wright admitted to investigators that she purchased numerous items that were not for the benefit of the OSSD food service program. She later returned several carloads of items, many of which had been kept in her basement and were still in their original packaging. Some of these items had been purchased up to five years prior.

Wright's contract of employment with Oneida Special School District was allowed to expire on June 30, 2017. On August 22, 2017, Verna Wright was indicted by the Scott County Grand Jury on one count of theft of property over \$60,000 and one count of official misconduct.

"This investigation speaks to the importance of separating the key functions of a financial process," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "The same person should not be responsible for preparing checks and reviewing bank statements and invoices. It's a key reason why this activity went undetected for several years."

To view the investigative report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

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