



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

June 23, 2026

Cumberland Utility District Investigation Reveals Misuse of District Funds and Resources

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller’s Office has revealed multiple instances of misuse of Cumberland Utility District funds, assets, and resources by current and former district officials and employees. The district provides drinking water service to more than 4,400 customers in rural areas of Roane and Morgan counties.

Investigators determined that former General Manager Robert Patty misappropriated at least \$3,295 in district funds by purchasing a welder for his personal use in December 2023. The welder was stored at Patty’s residence for approximately six months before being returned to the district in June 2024. Patty later acknowledged the unauthorized purchase and was placed on probation by the district. He resigned from his position in January 2025.

The investigation also found that district employee Roy Ooten lived in a district-owned shop building and used district-paid utilities for personal benefit. Investigators observed personal belongings inside the building during site visits, including household items, non-uniform clothing, and a firearm. Ooten also hosted an unauthorized event at the facility in 2024 that involved alcohol.

Additionally, investigators determined that Ooten failed a district-mandated drug screening in July 2023 after testing positive for alcohol during work hours. Although district policy required follow-up testing, investigators found that a former commissioner removed the testing requirement without documented board approval.

The investigation identified several other concerns involving district operations, including conflicts of interest related to grant-funded projects, a vehicle purchase that did not comply with district bidding requirements, questionable Medicare reimbursement payments to a former commissioner, and inadequate review of grant invoices.

Based upon this investigation, on June 15, 2026, the Roane County Grand Jury indicted Robert Clyde Patty and Roy Lee Ooten. Patty was indicted on one count of theft over \$2,500 and one count of official misconduct. Ooten was indicted on one count of official misconduct.

“Utility district boards must provide strong oversight of district assets, purchasing activities, and employee conduct,” said Comptroller Mumpower. “When policies are not followed, assets are not properly monitored,



and conflicts of interest are not disclosed, public confidence in the operation of a utility district can be undermined.”

To view the investigative report, go to tncot.cc/doireports. To view a map depicting Comptroller investigations, go to tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations

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Media contact: John Dunn, Director of Communications, 615.401.7755 or john.dunn@cot.tn.gov

