

# ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

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District Court 21-3-01  
Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania  
For the Period  
January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017

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January 2019



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General  
Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

### Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements (Statement) of District Court 21-3-01, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania (District Court), for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(c). The District Court's management is responsible for presenting this Statement in accordance with the criteria set forth in Note 1. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on this Statement based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the examination to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the statement of receipts and disbursements. The nature, timing and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgement, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Statement, whether due to fraud or error. We believe that the evidence we obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code* to audit the accounts of each district court to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*.

## Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

In our opinion, the Statement referred to above, for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017, is presented in accordance with the criteria set forth in Note 1, in all material respects.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; fraud and noncompliance with provisions of laws or regulations that have a material effect on the Statement; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance; noncompliance with provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that has a material effect on the Statement. We are also required to obtain and report the views of responsible officials concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on internal control over reporting on the Statement or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

Our consideration of internal control over reporting on the Statement was for the limited purpose of expressing an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over reporting on the Statement that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies and therefore, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified. However, as described below, we identified certain deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be a material weaknesses or a significant deficiency.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the Statement will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis. We consider the deficiency listed below to be a material weakness:

- Escrow Monies Not Always Disbursed Timely - Recurring.

A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance. We consider the deficiency listed below to be a significant deficiency:

- Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Statement is free from material misstatement, we performed tests of the District Court's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of Statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our engagement, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

The two examination findings contained in this report cite conditions that existed in the operation of the District Court during the previous three engagement periods and were not corrected during the current examination period. The District Court should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this report.

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.

We appreciate the courtesy extended by the District Court 21-3-01, Schuylkill County, to us during the course of our examination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michael B. Kashishian, CPA, CGAP, CFE, Director, Bureau of County Audits, at 717-787-1363.



Eugene A. DePasquale  
Auditor General

January 3, 2019

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DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	147,387
Motor Carrier Road Tax Fines		349
Overweight Fines		250
Littering Law Fines		57
Child Restraint Fines		1,443
Department of Revenue Court Costs		128,773
Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs		17,478
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		12,543
Domestic Violence Costs		4,397
Department of Agriculture Fines		1,200
Emergency Medical Service Fines		41,341
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		134,185
Judicial Computer System Fees		52,655
Access to Justice Fees		17,327
Criminal Justice Enhancement Account Fees		4,999
Judicial Computer Project Surcharges		42,545
Constable Service Surcharges		6,843
Miscellaneous State Fines and Costs		96,571
		<hr/>
Total receipts (Note 2)		710,343
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 3)		<hr/> (710,343)
Balance due Commonwealth (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4)		-
Examination adjustments		<hr/> -
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (District Court) for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017	\$	<hr/> <hr/> -

Notes to the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

1. Criteria

The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements provides a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The Statement was 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.

2. Receipts

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 traffic, non-traffic, civil, and criminal cases filed with the District Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

District Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 709,964
State Police	<u>379</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 710,343</u></u>

4. Balance Due Commonwealth (District Court) For The Period January 1, 2014 To December 31, 2017

This balance reflects the 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.

5. Magisterial District Judge Serving During Examination Period

David A. Plachko served at District Court 21-3-01 for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

**Finding No. 1 - Escrow Monies Not Always Disbursed Timely - Recurring**

We cited the issue of escrow monies not always being disbursed timely in our prior three examination reports, with the most recent for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013. Our current examination found that the office did not correct this issue.

Our current examination of escrow security monies revealed that in 4 of the 5 cases tested collateral was not transferred from escrow and applied to fines, costs and fees in a timely manner. The time lapse from date of disposition to application ranged from 56 days to 433 days.

This condition existed because the office failed to review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and take appropriate action as recommended in our three prior examination reports.

The district court's bank account is essentially an escrow account on behalf of the Commonwealth and other participating parties. The court collects bail, security for motor vehicle trials, and other funds that must be held in escrow until disposition of the case. Once a case has been disposed, funds held in escrow should be transferred to the appropriate account or disbursed immediately.

Good internal accounting controls require that funds be disbursed timely. The failure to follow this procedure could result in monies not being paid to whom they are due.

Without a good system of internal control over funds received by the office, the possibility of funds being lost or misappropriated increases significantly.

**Recommendation**

We strongly recommend that the district court review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and take appropriate action and disburse funds to whom they are due.

**Management's Response**

The Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

Staff is given responsibility to review escrow reports weekly.

**Auditor's Conclusion**

This is the fourth consecutive report that this deficiency was cited. It is imperative that the district court take all steps necessary to comply with our recommendation. During our next examination, we will determine if the office complied with our recommendation.



DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring**

We cited the district court for inadequate arrest warrant and DL-38 procedures in the prior three examination reports, with the most recent for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2013. Our current examination found that the office did not correct this issue.

Warrants and Requests For Suspension Of Operating Privileges (DL-38s) are used to enforce the collection of monies on traffic and non-traffic cases in which defendants failed to make payments when required. A Warrant of Arrest (AOPC 417) is used to authorize an official to arrest a defendant, to collect fines and costs from the defendant after a disposition, or to collect collateral for a trial. If the defendant does not respond within ten days to a citation or summons, a Warrant of Arrest may be issued. A Request for Suspension of Driving Privileges for Failure to Respond to a Citation or Summons or Pay Fines and Costs Imposed (AOPC 638A) is used to notify the defendant in writing that his/her license will be suspended if he/she fails to respond to the traffic citation or summons. A DL-38 cannot be issued for a parking violation.

During our testing of warrant procedures, we noted that warrant procedures established by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual* (Manual) were not always followed. The Magisterial District Judge did not consistently issue warrants when required. We tested 28 instances in which a warrant was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that 16 were not issued timely and 8 were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 63 days to 648 days.

In addition, of 20 warrants required to be returned or recalled, 11 were not returned timely. The time of issuance to the time of return ranged from 197 days to 1,118 days.

Furthermore, we tested 18 instances in which a DL-38 was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that 12 were not issued timely and 3 were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 93 days to 648 days.

These conditions existed because the district court failed to establish and implement an adequate system of internal controls over warrants and DL-38s as recommended in the three prior examination reports.

The Manual establishes the uniform written internal control policies and procedures for all district courts.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)**

**Warrant Issuance Procedures:** The Manual states that on October 1, 1998, new warrant procedures took effect for summary cases. Amendments were made to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rules 430, 431, 454, 455, 456, 460, 461, and 462. To comply with the new changes, the Notice of Impending Warrant (AOPC A418) was created with the purpose of informing the defendant that failure to pay the amount due or to appear for a Payment Determination Hearing will result in the issuance of an arrest warrant. The defendant is also informed that his/her response must be made within ten days of the date of the notice.

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rule 430, a Notice of Impending Warrant may be issued in a post-disposition summary case for any of the following reasons:

- A guilty disposition is recorded and no payment is made or a time payment schedule is not created.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and a previously deposited collateral payment, when applied, does not pay the case balance in full.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and the defendant defaults on a time payment schedule.

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. 430, a warrant SHALL be issued in a summary case for any of the following reasons (a Notice of Impending Warrant is not necessary for the following):

- The defendant has failed to respond to a citation or summons that was served either personally or by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- The citation or summons is returned undeliverable.
- The Magisterial District Judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the defendant will not obey a summons.

**Warrant Return Procedures:** The Manual states that the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) recommends that those in possession of arrest warrants should be notified to return warrants that have not been served. For summary traffic and non-traffic cases, outstanding warrants should be returned to the Magisterial District Judge's office within 60 days (120 days effective December of 2016) of issuance. Returned warrants can either be recorded in the Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS) as unserved, if the defendant is unable to be located; or they can be recalled for reissue, if the server has not exhausted all means of finding the defendant.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)**

**DL-38 Procedures:** The Manual states that once a citation is given to the defendant or a summons is issued, the defendant has ten days to respond. If on the eleventh day, the defendant has not responded, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 requires that the defendant be notified that he/she has fifteen days from the date of notice to respond to the citation/summons before his/her license is suspended. In accordance with Section 1533 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, the defendant has 15 days to respond to the defendant's copy of the DL-38. If the defendant does not respond by the fifteenth day, the Magisterial District Judge's office shall notify the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation by issuing the appropriate License Suspension Request (AOPC 638B,D,E).

In addition, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 also requires a post-disposition DL-38 (AOPC 638B/E) be issued if the defendant neglects to pay fines and costs imposed at the time of disposition, or fails to make a scheduled time payment.

The failure to follow warrant and DL-38 procedures could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders. Additionally, the risk is increased for funds to be lost or misappropriated.

Adherence to the uniform internal control policies and procedures, as set forth in the Manual, would have ensured that there were adequate internal controls over warrants and DL-38s.

**Recommendations**

We strongly recommend that the district court review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as required by the Manual. We further recommend that the court review warrant control reports and notify police or other officials to return warrants that are unserved for 60 days (120 days as of December 2016) for summary traffic and non-traffic cases as recommended by the Manual.

**Management's Response**

The Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

Staff is directed to review warrant and DL-38 reports on a regular basis. A request was made to the County for additional staff to assist with these reports. The District Court also began utilizing more constables to assist with warrant service.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

**Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)**

Auditor's Conclusion

This is the fourth consecutive report this deficiency was cited. It is imperative that the district court take all corrective actions necessary to comply with our recommendations. The risk of uncollected fines and unpunished offenders continues to exist long as these deficiencies exist. During our next examination, we will determine if the office complied with our recommendations.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
SUMMARY OF PRIOR EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

Summary Of Prior Examination Recommendations

During our prior examination, we recommended:

- That the office review the undisbursed funds report on a monthly basis and disburse funds timely to who they are due.
- That the office review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as recommended by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual*. We further recommend that the court review warrant control reports and notify police or other officials to return warrants that are unserved for 60 days for summary traffic and non-traffic cases as recommended by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual*.

During our current examination, we noted that the office did not comply with our recommendations. Please see the current year findings for additional information.

DISTRICT COURT 21-3-01  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

This report was initially distributed to:

**The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell**  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

**The Honorable Thomas B. Darr**  
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania  
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania  
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

**The Honorable David A. Plachko**  
Magisterial District Judge

**The Honorable George F. Halcovage, Jr.**  
Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

**The Honorable Christy Joy**  
Controller

**Ms. Lois A. Wallauer**  
District Court Administrator

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://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](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).