



Auditor of Public Accounts
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harmon Releases Audit of Graves County Sheriff's Tax Settlement

FRANKFORT, Ky. – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the sheriff's settlement – 2019 taxes for Graves County Sheriff Jon Hayden. State law requires the auditor to annually audit the accounts of each county sheriff. In compliance with this law, the auditor issues two sheriff's reports each year: one reporting on the audit of the sheriff's tax account, and the other reporting on the audit of the fee account used to operate the office.

Auditing standards require the auditor's letter to communicate whether the sheriff's settlement presents fairly the taxes charged, credited and paid in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The sheriff's settlement is prepared on the regulatory basis, which is described in the auditor's opinion letter. Regulatory basis reporting for the sheriff's settlement is an acceptable reporting methodology, and this reporting methodology is followed for all 120 sheriff settlements in Kentucky.

The sheriff's financial statement fairly presents the taxes charged, credited and paid for the period April 16, 2019 through May 15, 2020 in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting.

As part of the audit process, the auditor must comment on noncompliance with laws, regulations, contracts, and grants. The auditor must also comment on material weaknesses involving the internal control over financial operations and reporting.

The audit contains the following comment:

The Graves County Sheriff's Office lacks adequate segregation of duties: This is a repeat finding and was included in the prior year audit report as Finding 2018-001. The Graves County Sheriff's Office lacks adequate segregation of duties over the accounting and reporting functions of the sheriff's office. The sheriff's bookkeeper collects cash from customers, prepares monthly reports, prepares deposits, posts to the receipts and disbursements ledgers, and performs the monthly bank reconciliations.

Rather than segregate the accounting functions of the office, the sheriff placed reliance on his trust in the bookkeeper. A lack of segregation of duties or strong oversight increases the risk of undetected errors and fraud.

Good internal controls dictate that segregation of duties over these tasks, or the implementation of compensating controls, is essential for providing protection from asset misappropriation and helping to prevent inaccurate financial reporting. Additionally, proper segregation of duties protects employees in the normal course of performing their daily responsibilities.

We recommend the Graves County Sheriff segregate the duties noted above by allowing different deputies to perform them. For those duties that cannot be segregated due to a limited number staff, strong management oversight by the sheriff or designee could be a cost effective alternative. This oversight should include reviewing the daily deposits, comparing the daily checkout sheets to the monthly reports, and reviewing the monthly bank reconciliations. Documentation, such as the sheriff's or designee's initials or signature, should be provided on those items that are reviewed.

County Sheriff's Response: Comment noted. The office will institute measures to adhere to these recommendations.

The sheriff's responsibilities include collecting property taxes, providing law enforcement and performing services for the county fiscal court and courts of justice. The sheriff's office is funded through statutory commissions and fees collected in conjunction with these duties.

The audit report can be found on the [auditor's website](#).

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