



Auditor of Public Accounts  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Harmon Releases Audit of Hancock County Sheriff's Tax Settlement**

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the sheriff's settlement – 2016 taxes for Hancock County Sheriff Ralph Dale Bozarth. 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, 2016 through April 17, 2017 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 internal control over financial operations and reporting.

The audit contains the following comment:

**The sheriff's office lacks adequate segregation of duties over receipts and disbursements:** This is a repeat finding and was included in the prior year audit report as Finding 2015-001. During the audit period, a lack of segregation of duties existed over the receipt and disbursement functions of the Hancock County Sheriff's office. The bookkeeper was responsible for the collection of cash and preparation of the daily deposit and daily tax collection journal. She was also responsible for the preparation of monthly reports and issuance of monthly tax distribution checks to each taxing

district. There was no documentation that monthly reconciliations were reviewed by any other individual. According to the sheriff, this lack of segregation of duties was due to a limited number of employees available to properly segregate these job duties. Inadequately segregated duties over financial processes could result in undetected misappropriation of assets, inaccurate financial reporting, and errors.

The segregation of duties over receipts and disbursements or implementation of compensating controls, when needed because the number of staff is limited, is essential for providing protection to employees in the normal course of performing their duties and can also help prevent inaccurate financial reporting and misappropriation of assets.

To adequately protect employees in the normal course of performing their duties and to help prevent inaccurate financial reporting and misappropriation of assets, we recommend the sheriff separate the duties over the receipt and disbursement functions listed above. If this is not possible, due to limited staff, then strong oversight over those areas should occur and involve the sheriff or an employee not currently performing any of those functions. The individual providing this oversight should initial source documents as evidence of this review.

*Sheriff's Response: Lack of staff, unable to correct.*

Auditor's Reply: Even with limited staff, compensating controls or oversight by the official should be implemented as suggested to attempt to offset the lack of segregation of duties.

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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