



Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller

November 16, 2016

Rutherford County Sheriff Broke Numerous Laws and Policies

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has completed its review of numerous problems within the Rutherford County's Sheriff's Office. Many of the issues involve Rutherford County Sheriff Robert Arnold and Chief Deputy of Administration Joe Russell, who are currently facing a 14-count federal indictment.

Investigators determined that Sheriff Arnold and Chief Deputy Russell violated multiple state and local laws, policies and procedures by concealing their relationship with JailCigs. JailCigs is a Marietta, Georgia-based company that sells e-cigarettes to inmates, including inmates within the Rutherford County Jail.

Sheriff Arnold failed to disclose his conflict of interest with JailCigs even though he and his wife received a combined \$66,790 from the company from December 2013 through April 2015. Chief Deputy Russell received \$52,234.41 from JailCigs over that same period. Arnold and Russell also violated county purchasing policies by circumventing the process and failing to solicit bids.

When Comptroller investigators interviewed Sheriff Arnold regarding his conflict of interest, he stated, "The Sheriff is exempt from all policies and procedures." He could not provide documentation to support his statement.



Investigators also revealed that a Rutherford County deputy made false statements on federal and state forms when he indicated he was a United States citizen. The deputy also claimed he was a U.S. citizen when he applied for Tennessee Peace Officer Standards and Training certification in 2010. State law requires officers to be citizens of the United States, or permanent legal residents who have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military. The deputy became a U.S. citizen on February 24, 2016 after investigators started asking questions about the false statements.

The Comptroller's investigation was completed in conjunction with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The findings and recommendations presented in the investigative report have been reviewed with the district attorney general for the Sixteenth Judicial District, and the Office of the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee.

"State law is clear about the need for public officials to disclose and avoid conflicts of interest," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "It's vitally important that elected officials and government leaders commit to honesty, integrity and ethical behavior."

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

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