



# Commonwealth of Virginia

**Walter J. Kucharski, Auditor**

**Auditor of Public Accounts  
P.O. Box 1295  
Richmond, Virginia 23218**

June 10, 2002

The Honorable Louis K. Campbell  
Chief Judge  
County of Augusta General District Court  
P. O. Box 205  
Fincastle, VA 24090

As part of our audit of the Virginia District Court System, we have audited the cash receipts and disbursements of the County of Augusta General District Court for the period October 1, 2000 through December 31, 2001.

Our primary objectives were to test the accuracy of financial transactions recorded on the Court's financial management system; evaluate the Court's internal controls; and test its compliance with significant state laws, regulations, and policies. However, our audit was more limited than would be necessary to provide assurance on the internal controls or on overall compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

The results of our tests found the Court properly stated, in all material respects, the amounts recorded and reported in the financial management system. However, we noted weaknesses in internal controls and noncompliance with state laws, regulations, and policies that the Clerk needs to address as described below.

## Improve and Adhere to Internal Control Procedures

The Clerk does not record daily deposits to the bank and the court's automated system timely in accordance with Section 17.1-271 of the Code of Virginia and the Financial Management System User's Guide. Additionally, in two of 15 days tested, the Clerk could not explain why the bank deposit in the court's automated system did not agree to the validated bank deposit slip. We also observed that the court's vault is unlocked and accessible to the public. These conditions increase the risk of fraud or misappropriation of collections. The Clerk should deposit collections timely and ensure the vault remains secure at all times.

The Clerk does not maintain proper documentation to support critical changes in the court's automated systems. In one case, the Clerk removed fines and costs and changed the case conclusion without proper documentation. In another case, the Clerk could not locate case papers; therefore, we could not confirm the proper assessment of fines and costs. In three additional cases, the Clerk removed

the tried in absence fee without proper documentation. The Clerk stated she reviews the envelope postmark date and if the postmark occurred on or before the trial day she will remove the fee. However, the Clerk did not retain the envelope for audit. The Clerk should properly maintain all documentation that supports changes to the court's automated system and should not make changes to fees without the judge's permission.

The Clerk does not properly document due date changes as required by Section 19.2-354 of the Code of Virginia. We found that the Clerk routinely alters the due dates without appropriate supporting documentation. The Clerk indicated that it is her policy to grant 90-day extensions to defendants attempting to make regular payments. However, there is no letter from the judge directing her to do this, nor are there any individual court orders. All fines and costs are payable immediately upon final case disposition unless otherwise ordered by the court or evidenced by a written payment plan. Court staff should not alter due dates unless they have an established or revised payment agreement so that the defendant understands their obligation to the court.

The Clerk should follow the internal control practices set for district courts and properly maintain all information supporting changes to the court's automated system.

We discussed these comments with the Clerk on June 10, 2002, and we acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the court during this engagement.

#### AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

WJK:whb

cc: The Honorable A. Lee McGratty, Judge  
Lesley R. Piner, Clerk  
Don Lucido, Director of Technical Assistance  
Supreme Court of Virginia  
LeAnne Lane, Court Analyst  
Supreme Court of Virginia

The Honorable Louis K. Campbell  
Chief Judge  
County of Augusta General District Court  
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The Honorable A. Lee McGratty, Judge  
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1 Report File  
1 Working Papers

# Commonwealth of Virginia

## Auditor of Public Accounts

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(804) 225-3350

**TO:** Lesley R. Piner, Clerk of the General District Court

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Clerk Fax Number –

Clerk Phone Number –

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**FROM:**

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**DATE:** Wednesday, December 15, 1999

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**Number of pages including cover page:** 3

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**CONFIDENTIAL FOR:** Lesley R. Piner

**MESSAGE:** Enclosed is a **DRAFT COPY** of our audit report. We previously discussed these findings with you during the audit. We are providing this draft copy to afford you an additional opportunity to comment before we finalize the report.

**It is important that you call \_\_\_\_\_ at (804)-225-3350 when you receive this draft for a discussion of our findings.** We will issue the final report shortly after hearing from you.