

**ATTESTATION REPORT  
OF  
PAWNEE COUNTY COURT**

**JANUARY 1, 2021, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022**

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**Issued on June 30, 2023**

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*We will maintain a professionally prepared staff, utilizing up-to-date technology, and following current Government Auditing Standards.*

## **Audit Staff Working On This Examination**

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PAWNEE COUNTY COURT

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PAWNEE COUNTY COURT

**COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION**

During our examination of the Pawnee County Court, we noted a certain deficiency and other operational matters that are presented here. The following comment is required to be reported in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and is considered to be a material weakness.

This comment and recommendation is intended to improve the internal control over financial reporting or result in operational efficiencies in the following area:

**Segregation of Duties**

Good internal control includes a plan of organization, procedures, and documentation designed to safeguard assets and to provide reliable financial records. A system of internal control should include a proper segregation of duties, so no one individual is capable of handling all phases of a transaction from beginning to end.

We noted that the office of the County Court lacked a sufficient segregation of duties, as one person was capable of handling all aspects of processing transactions from beginning to end. Additionally, staff could create and issue orders affixed with the Judge's signature in the JUSTICE (Judicial User System to Improve Court Efficiency) application without formal documentation to support that the Judge approved the order. That same staff had access to court receipts and were able to record non-monetary transactions (e.g., waiving fines) in JUSTICE. We further noted that Pawnee County Court access had also been given to one other Clerk Magistrate who was not an employee of the Pawnee County Court.

The following errors were noted:

- For two cases tested, balances, totaling \$170, were showing as owed on the cases despite documentation to waive those costs, as follows:
  - For one criminal case tested, the defendant was released from probation in December 2022 and pre-paid costs, totaling \$28, were refunded. Due to the refund, the case now indicated a balance due of the same amount; however, no non-monetary receipt was issued to remove these fees from the case. This case was noted as outstanding on the Overdue Case Account Report.
  - For one juvenile case tested, costs totaling \$142, were outstanding on the case despite an order of dismissal filed in March 2022.

A lack of segregation of duties increases the risk of possible errors or irregularities; however, due to a limited number of personnel, an adequate segregation of duties may not be possible without additional cost. Further, personnel are under the direction of both the Nebraska State Court Administrator and the Presiding Judge.

We have included this comment in previous examinations.

We recommend the County Court and the Nebraska State Court Administrator review this situation. As always, the cost of hiring additional personnel versus the benefit of a proper segregation of duties must be weighed. We also recommend the Supreme Court implement procedures to ensure that each Judge's approval of orders is formally documented. We further recommend the County Court implement procedures to ensure all costs are appropriately waived upon order of the County Court.

PAWNEE COUNTY COURT

COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

(Concluded)

**Segregation of Duties** (Concluded)

*County Court's Response: The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) accepts that there is a risk from one person having the authority to initiate and complete financial transactions. To reduce the risk of improper transactions, court financial specialists review court records and provide assistance to county courts if there are discrepancies. However, the Judicial Branch does not have the financial and human resources to mitigate all risks related to segregation of duties sufficient to meet current audit guidelines. As a result, in order to fulfill all statutory obligations, the AOCP has determined that all clerk magistrates will have the authority to operate all financial functions of a court.*

*Regarding DOCKET authority: The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) understands that there is a risk related to the ability of someone other than the judge applying the judge's signature to an order within the DOCKET subsystem of JUSTICE, the court's case management system. This level of access is granted only to employees who work directly with the judges in and outside of the courtroom and only with the judge's approval and oversight. This electronic signature process is put into place to digitize and streamline the court process. The AOCP has determined no further action will be taken at this time, based on an evaluation of the level of risk, current IT priorities and resources, and a review of compensating controls and practices.*

*Regarding the errors noted under this section, in the criminal case tested, the non-monetary receipt has since been issued, which completes the matter. Regarding the juvenile case tested, the \$112.74 non-monetary receipt has now been issued.*

It should be noted this report is critical in nature, as it contains only our comment and recommendation on the area noted for improvement and does not include our observations on any accounting strengths of the County Court.

Draft copies of this report were furnished to the County Court to provide management an opportunity to review the report and to respond to the comment and recommendation included in this report. The formal response received has been incorporated into this report. A response that indicates corrective action has been taken was not verified at this time, but it will be verified in the next examination.



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## PAWNEE COUNTY COURT

### INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

Pawnee County Court  
Pawnee City, Nebraska 68420

We have examined the accompanying Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions of the Pawnee County Court as of and for the calendar years ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022. The County Court's management is responsible for the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions based on the accounting system and procedures set forth in Note 1. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions 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 Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions are based on the accounting system and procedures set forth in Note 1, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions. The nature, timing, and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgment, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions, 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 required to be independent and to meet our ethical responsibilities in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to the engagement.

In our opinion, the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions for the calendar years ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022, are based on the accounting system and procedures prescribed by the Nebraska Supreme Court, as 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; noncompliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, or grant agreements that have a material effect on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions; fraud that is material, either quantitatively or qualitatively, to the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance. We are also required to obtain and report the views of management concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions are presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the internal control over the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities

Arising from Cash Transactions or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions. Our examination disclosed a certain finding that is required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*, and that finding, along with the views of management, is described in the Comment Section of the report.

The purpose of this report is to express an opinion on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions, as described in paragraph one above. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose. This report is a matter of public record, and its distribution is not limited.



Mike Foley  
Auditor of Public Accounts  
Lincoln, Nebraska

June 30, 2023

PAWNEE COUNTY COURT  
PAWNEE CITY, NEBRASKA  
**SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**  
**ARISING FROM CASH TRANSACTIONS**  
**CUSTODIAL FUNDS**

For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2022

	Balance January 1, 2022	Additions	Deductions	Balance December 31, 2022
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Cash and Deposits	\$ 9,664	\$ 71,071	\$ 73,608	\$ 7,127
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Due to State Treasurer:				
Regular Fees	\$ 1,129	\$ 8,910	\$ 9,161	\$ 878
Law Enforcement Fees	37	556	534	59
State Judges Retirement Fund	248	3,649	3,524	373
Court Administrative Fees	166	2,890	2,797	259
Legal Services Fees	153	2,304	2,228	229
Due to County Treasurer:				
Regular Fines	1,200	11,904	11,804	1,300
Overload Fines	-	-	-	-
Regular Fees	-	1,294	1,125	169
Petty Cash Fund	100	-	-	100
Municipality Fines	-	340	340	-
Trust Fund Payable	6,631	39,224	42,095	3,760
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 9,664</b>	<b>\$ 71,071</b>	<b>\$ 73,608</b>	<b>\$ 7,127</b>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of the Schedule.



PAWNEE COUNTY COURT  
PAWNEE CITY, NEBRASKA  
**SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**  
**ARISING FROM CASH TRANSACTIONS**  
**CUSTODIAL FUNDS**

For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2021

	Balance January 1, 2021	Additions	Deductions	Balance December 31, 2021
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Cash and Deposits	\$ 14,229	\$ 50,207	\$ 54,772	\$ 9,664
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Due to State Treasurer:				
Regular Fees	\$ 1,786	\$ 10,667	\$ 11,324	\$ 1,129
Law Enforcement Fees	105	635	703	37
State Judges Retirement Fund	626	3,869	4,247	248
Court Administrative Fees	488	4,185	4,507	166
Legal Services Fees	421	2,694	2,962	153
Due to County Treasurer:				
Regular Fines	1,524	12,397	12,721	1,200
Overload Fines	-	300	300	-
Regular Fees	1,074	1,214	2,288	-
Petty Cash Fund	100	-	-	100
Municipality Fines	50	470	520	-
Trust Fund Payable	8,055	13,776	15,200	6,631
Total Liabilities	\$ 14,229	\$ 50,207	\$ 54,772	\$ 9,664

The accompanying notes are an integral part of the schedule.

PAWNEE COUNTY COURT  
**NOTES TO FINANCIAL SCHEDULES**

For the Calendar Years Ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022

**1. Criteria**

**A. Reporting Entity**

The Pawnee County Court is established by State statute and is administratively operated through the Court Administrator's Office of the Nebraska Supreme Court, which is part of the State of Nebraska reporting entity. The Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions of the County Court reflect only the Custodial Funds activity of the County Court, including the receipts and their subsequent disbursement to the appropriate entities for which they were collected. The Schedules do not reflect the personal services expenses of the County Court, which are paid by the Nebraska Supreme Court, or the operating expenses, which are paid by Pawnee County.

**B. Basis of Accounting**

The accounting records of the County Court Custodial Funds are maintained, and the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions have been prepared, based on the accounting system and procedures prescribed by the Nebraska Supreme Court. Under this system of accounting, fines, fees, and receipts relating to trust funds are shown as additions to assets and as an increase in the related liability when received or collected. Likewise, disbursements are shown as deductions to assets and as a decrease in the related liability when a check is written.

**2. Deposits and Investments**

Funds held by the County Court are deposited and invested in accordance with rules issued by the Supreme Court, as directed by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 25-2713 (Reissue 2016). Funds are generally consolidated in an interest-bearing checking account; however, the County Court may order certain trust funds to be invested separately. Any deposits in excess of the amount insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation are required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-2326.04 (Reissue 2018) to be secured either by a surety bond or as provided in the Public Funds Deposit Security Act.