LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

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Report Highlights

St. Helena Parish Fire Protection District No. 4

Audit Control # 50250020
Investigative Audit Services • November 2026

Why We Conducted This Audit

In September 2025, the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) received multiple complaints regarding St. Helena Parish Fire Protection District No. 4's (District 4) use of public funds. LLA initiated this audit to determine the validity of those complaints.

What We Found

Questionable Purchases

From May 4, 2024 to July 15, 2025, District 4 employees and officials, including former Board of Commissioners (Board) President Eric Washington and former Fire Chief Bradley Graves, appear to have purchased fuel and auto parts totaling at least $6,677 not necessary for District 4 operations. Purchases that appear to benefit individuals and do not have a public purpose may violate the Louisiana Constitution, which prohibits the donation of public funds, and state law.

Personal Use of Equipment by Former Board President

Mr. Washington stated that he retained possession of District 4's utility trailer for several years and allowed a private individual to use the utility trailer. By using District 4 equipment for personal purposes, Mr. Washington may have violated state law.

District 4 May Have Violated State Law While Contracting for Services

From January 19, 2024 to August 25, 2025, District 4 paid seven individuals $67,624 and purchased tools and materials totaling $16,203 to remodel a District 4 fire station. According to Mr. Washington, these individuals worked under one contractor (who was included in the seven) that the Board hired to remodel the fire station. Although this was a public works project as defined by state law, District 4 appears to have allowed work to be performed without a written contract and failed to require the contractor to provide a surety bond. By allowing a contractor to perform services without a written contract or surety bond, District 4 management may have violated state law.

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What We Found (Cont.)

Improper Use of Donated Funds

From April 2024 to March 2025, District 4 received $2,000 in funds donated by a local energy company. Bank records show that Mr. Graves deposited the donated funds, and other miscellaneous funds totaling $260, into a separate bank account in District 4's name. According to Mr. Graves, this bank account was established as a Fireman/Volunteer relief fund, and he used the funds to assist community members and/or firemen/volunteers in need. Although District 4 may accept donations, once accepted, those funds become public funds and must be used in furtherance of the public purpose for which District 4 was created. By using public funds to personally assist individuals, Mr. Graves may have violated the Louisiana Constitution, which prohibits the donation of public funds, and state law.

District 4 Improperly Provided Health Insurance to a Former Employee

District 4 improperly used public funds totaling at least $12,825 to provide health insurance to a former employee from January 2024 to November 2025. By providing health insurance benefits to an individual not employed by District 4, management may have violated the Louisiana Constitution, which prohibits the donation of public funds, and state law.