



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR  
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

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## LOUISIANA DISTRICT PUBLIC DEFENDERS COMPLIANCE WITH REPORT REQUIREMENTS

BATON ROUGE – Twenty-nine of the state’s 42 public defenders’ offices that provide legal representation to indigent clients ran deficits totaling slightly more than \$5 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2012, according to a report released Monday by Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera.

As a result, the 29 agencies had to use their savings - or fund balances - from previous years to finance operations.

Overall, the combined expenditures for all 42 offices covering the 64 parishes by the end of last June was \$54.1 million, compared to combined revenues of \$49.1 million.

The largest deficits were in 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District in Calcasieu Parish, which reported a shortfall of \$752,632; and the 21<sup>st</sup> Judicial District that covers Livingston, Tangipahoa and St. Helena parishes, where the deficit was \$664,378.

The smallest deficits were recorded in the 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District in St. Landry Parish, where the shortfall was \$5,902, and in the 35<sup>th</sup> District that covers Grant Parish, where it was \$6,780.

Conversely, the largest surpluses were reported from 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District covering Franklin, Richland and West Carroll parishes, which ended up \$138,367 in the black; and the Orleans Parish district, which had a surplus of \$101,654.

All public defenders’ offices complied with state law by submitting uniform reports of expenditures to Purpera’s office.

For the year ending June 30, 2012, revenues for the defenders’ offices ranged from a high of \$7.99 million in the Orleans Parish courts, to a low of \$87,752 in Cameron Parish’s 38<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. The highest and lowest expenditures for defenders were recorded in the same two parishes: Orleans Parish spent \$7.89 million and Cameron Parish spent \$113,613.

To help financially-strapped public defender offices, the statewide public defender board in the 2011-2012 fiscal year reduced or eliminated state funding to local public defenders that had a positive fund balance in order to finance the districts “with the greatest financial need,” according to the report.



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The 29 parishes with deficits tapped their fund balances as a “short-term solution that allowed the continuation of the public defense system during lean economic times. At the same time, this seriously depleted most of the local districts’ fund balances.”

The auditor’s office recommended the state board continue to monitor the fiscal operations of the 42 offices, including “confirming that deficit-spending is occurring and requiring districts that are deficit-spending to prepare and submit written corrective action plans” to the state board. It also recommended that the state board monitor the districts’ plans closely “and provide guidance to public defenders to ensure that deficit spending is eliminated.”

*NOTE: A complete list of the financial conditions of all 42 districts can be found at pages 6 and 7 of the report.*

**For more information, contact:**

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