



State of Tennessee

Justin Wilson, State Comptroller

For Immediate Release: Nov. 18, 2009

COMPTROLLER INVESTIGATION

LEADS TO INDICTMENT IN MASON

Mason's former city and court clerk was indicted by the Tipton County Grand Jury earlier this month following an investigation by the state Comptroller's Division of Municipal Audit.

On November 6, 2009, Arnita Mitchell posted bond and was released from the custody of the Tipton County Sheriff's Office on charges that she stole nearly \$100,000 from the town's coffers.

Between January 1, 2007 and June 30, 2009, auditors discovered that Mitchell took more than \$96,000 worth of taxpayer money for her personal use. Also, auditors found that she had received more than \$1,000 worth of water and gas services from the town for herself and another person without paying. And auditors found Mitchell had falsified written and electronic town records to cover her tracks.

"This is the type of excellent work we expect from our auditors," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "While it's disappointing that fraud, waste and abuse sometimes occur in government, our auditors are trained to spot it when it happens. Hopefully, cases such as the one involving Ms. Mitchell will serve as a deterrent to anyone who might consider improperly using public money for private gain."

"Let this be a warning to government employees who commit fraud: It's only a matter of time before my investigative team catches you and you are brought to justice," added Dennis Dycus, director of the Division of Municipal Audit. "Abuse of taxpayer funds cannot and will not be tolerated. And now, more than ever, public officials must be diligent stewards of tax dollars to ensure they are not only spent wisely, but also safeguarded from greedy hands."

Following the investigation, Mitchell was indicted on the following charges: Theft over \$60,000; Forgery over \$60,000; Computer Fraud over \$60,000; Theft of Services over \$1,000; three (3) counts of E-felony Forgery; and three (3) counts of Official Misconduct.

Ms. Mitchell has been instructed by Criminal Court Judge Joseph H. Walker to retain counsel on or before her next court appearance on November 30, 2009.

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Media contact: Blake Fontenay, Communications Director, (615) 253-2668 or blake.fontenay@tn.gov

[Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury](#)

State Capitol Nashville, TN 37243

Phone: (615) 741-2501

Email: comptroller.web@tn.gov