



## State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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### **Former Surgoinsville Utility District Commissioner Sentenced for Scheme to Receive Illegal Payments**

Hawkins County Criminal Court Judge John Dugger sentenced Hanes Cooper today for taking unlawful compensation from the Surgoinsville Utility District over a three-year period. Judge Dugger placed Cooper on six years of probation and denied him the possibility of expunging his criminal record.

Cooper, who has also served as a Hawkins County commissioner and as Surgoinsville's mayor, pleaded guilty in June to attempted theft over \$10,000, official misconduct and conspiracy to commit forgery over \$10,000 after a Comptroller's investigation uncovered that Cooper was getting paid for work he was performing at the Surgoinsville Utility District while he also served as a commissioner in violation of state law.

The Comptroller's Division of Municipal Audit discovered that Cooper put his daughter, Robin Hoffman, on the utility district's payroll and submitted forged timesheets on her behalf for hours she did not work. The utility district manager testified that Cooper started having checks issued in his daughter's name for the hours Cooper himself was working only after a customer demanded to see Cooper's pay records in late 2003.

From late 2003 until March 2004, no checks for labor or work were issued to Cooper other than his state-authorized commissioner pay. Checks were first issued to Cooper's daughter in March of 2004 and continued until 2008, totaling over \$35,000.

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