



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

June 12, 2024

Gibson County Sheriff Profited from Inmate Labor
Sheriff Paul Thomas Indicted on Multiple Counts

A new investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in the indictment of Gibson County Sheriff Paul Thomas, who has served as Sheriff since 2014.

The investigation outlines a scheme employed by Thomas to enrich himself and a group of investors by profiting from the labor and care of Gibson County and Tennessee Department of Correction inmates.

In 2020, Thomas and a group of local investors created three for-profit businesses known collectively as the Alliance Group. These businesses provided staffing assistance to local businesses, housed current and former inmates at a transitional home called Orchard House, and provided transportation to work release inmates and former inmates traveling to and from work.



Investigators determined that Thomas directed \$1,417,204.06 in inmate wage fees and deductions to profit the Alliance Group from February 2020 through October 2022. At least 170 inmates in Thomas' custody were employed by the Alliance staffing agency during the investigation. Alliance Transportation was paid \$18 per day to transport these inmates to and from work. Additionally, 82 inmates were allowed to reside at Orchard House instead of the Gibson County jail without proper approval and were charged \$40 per day by Orchard House.

Thomas, who held a 20% ownership interest in Alliance, was prohibited by state law from profiting or benefiting from the labor of inmates. He received \$181,644.50 in compensation, payroll benefits, and legal representation services from Alliance. This money was derived from inmate labor.

Thomas also deceived the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) by allowing 74 state inmates held in the Gibson County jail to reside at Orchard House without proper approval by a judge. Thomas continued to show the jail as the inmate location in the state's offender management system which resulted in the county collecting \$507,273 in reimbursements from TDOC. Thomas then required the county to disburse these funds to Orchard House without TDOC's knowledge or consent. Orchard House was neither attached to the jail nor staffed by jail personnel, and no contract existed between the county and Orchard House.

Furthermore, Thomas improperly handled the wages earned by inmates working for Alliance. Instead of having their wages deposited into an inmate trust account (also known as a commissary account) to benefit each individual inmate, Thomas directed \$448,637.09 of inmate wages to be deposited into a private account owned and controlled by the Alliance Group.

Based upon this investigation, in May 2024, Paul Thomas was indicted by both the Davidson and Gibson County Grand Juries on a combined total of 22 counts. These indictments include counts of theft, forgery, computer crimes, and official misconduct. A full list of charges can be found in the investigative report.

“Our investigators identified multiple deficiencies within the Sheriff’s Office that coincided with this scheme,” said Comptroller Mumpower. “We also learned that Sheriff Thomas failed to disclose his ownership interest in Alliance in his annual filings with the Tennessee Ethics Commission and violated his duty to secure and properly guard inmates until they were lawfully discharged.”

To view the investigative report, go to tncot.cc/doireports. To view a map depicting Comptroller investigations, go to tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations

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