



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

September 18, 2025

Hardeman County Clerk Charged Unlawful Fees to Officiate Marriage Ceremonies

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has found that the Hardeman County Clerk charged and collected approximately \$13,140 in unlawful fees to officiate at least 219 marriage ceremonies between September 2022 and July 2024.

Tennessee county clerks are granted the right to solemnize marriages; however, it is not lawful for a clerk to charge a fee or demand compensation for officiating marriage ceremonies pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 36-3-301(c)(2). Clerks are permitted under state law to accept, request, or solicit gratuities for officiating marriage ceremonies.

Investigators determined the clerk instructed her staff to advise applicants who wished to be married in the clerk's office that they would be charged the marriage license fee plus an additional \$60 fee for the clerk, herself. Applicants were also told they had to pay the \$60 fee in cash.



The clerk told investigators that she was aware of state law and had received training about what was acceptable; however, she did not give applicants a choice in paying the officiating fee.

On September 10, 2025, the county clerk reimbursed \$13,140 to the Hardeman County Trustee's General Fund for proper disbursement.

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

If you suspect fraud, waste, or abuse of public money in Tennessee, call the Comptroller's toll-free hotline at 800.232.5454, or file a report online at: tncot.cc/fraud. Follow us on X/Twitter [@TNCOT](https://twitter.com/TNCOT) and Instagram [@tncot](https://www.instagram.com/tncot)

Media contact: John Dunn, Director of Communications, 615.401.7755 or john.dunn@cot.tn.gov

