



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Unicoi County Schools

July 12, 2021

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JASON E. MUMPOWER
Comptroller

July 12, 2021

Unicoi County Board of Education
and Director of Schools
100 Nolichucky Avenue
Erwin, TN 37650

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Unicoi County Schools and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 1st Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy of the report is available for public inspection in our Office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Mumpower", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury

JEM/MLC

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Unicoi County Schools

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury, in conjunction with the Erwin Police Department, investigated allegations of malfeasance related to the Unicoi County Schools. The Comptroller's Office initiated the investigation after school officials identified questionable fuel purchases. The investigation was limited to selected records for the period June 1, 2015 through October 2, 2020. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 1st Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



Unicoi County is located in Northeast Tennessee and has approximately 18,313 residents. Unicoi County Middle School is located in the county seat of Erwin and is part of Unicoi County Schools (department). The department is governed by a six-member school board and operates one high school, one middle school, four elementary schools, one community learning center, and one career & technical education center.

The department issues fuel cards to bus drivers and other designated employees to allow them to purchase fuel for department vehicles at local gas stations. Each employee receives a unique fuel card and unique personal identification number (PIN) number.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

- **FORMER UNICOI COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER TRAVIS GRIFFITH USED A SCHOOL DEPARTMENT FUEL CARD TO MAKE PERSONAL FUEL PURCHASES TOTALING AT LEAST \$10,160**

During the period June 1, 2015 through October 2, 2020, former Unicoi County Middle School teacher and coach Travis Griffith used a department fuel card on at least 169 occasions to purchase at least \$10,160 worth of gasoline for his personal vehicle. In his role as assistant baseball coach, Griffith was authorized to purchase fuel for a school owned vehicle using the department fuel card, however, that vehicle used diesel fuel, not gasoline. Without the authority

or knowledge of school officials, Griffith used the department fuel card to purchase gasoline for his personal vehicle, [Refer to Exhibit 1] including purchases in Orangeburg, South Carolina, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and Cape Canaveral, Florida. Griffith resigned employment with the Unicoi County Schools on October 9, 2020.

Exhibit 1

05-18 - 05 INTERNATIONAL											
01/05	18:20	936907	GRIFFITH,	145236	0.0	PREM	27.830	2.47520	0.00310	\$68.97	3
01/20	17:47	936907	GRIFFITH,	178526	0.0	PREM	25.720	2.33690	0.00310	\$60.18	3
01/30	14:06	936907	GRIFFITH,	124783	0.0	PREM	24.090	2.38450	0.00310	\$57.51	3, 11
				Miles:	****		77.640			\$186.66	

Examples of personal gasoline purchases made by Griffith using the school department fuel card.

Summary of Personal Fuel Purchases		
Fiscal Year	Fuel Purchases	Amount
2016	38	\$ 2,419.32
2017	30	1,743.71
2018	28	1,829.54
2019	28	1,874.67
2020	28	1,475.34
2021	17	817.43
Total	169	\$ 10,160.01

On July 9, 2021, the Unicoi County Grand Jury indicted Travis Lee Griffith on one count of Theft over \$10,000.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment are merely accusations of criminal conduct, and not evidence. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and convicted through due process of law.

[Unicoi County Schools Investigation Exhibit](#)

INTERNAL CONTROL DEFICIENCY

Our investigation revealed the following internal control deficiency which enabled Griffith to make personal fuel purchases without prompt detection:

Deficiency: Unicoi County Schools officials did not adequately review monthly fuel invoices

Unicoi County Schools officials did not adequately review monthly fuel invoices, which included information concerning purchase locations and type of fuel purchased before submitting payment. Properly reviewing monthly invoices reduces the risks of improper fuel purchases.

School officials indicated they have corrected this deficiency.
