



Office of the State Auditor

# Caught in Traffic



**Processing Local Tickets & Fines:**  
A Review of Selected Internal Controls & Procedures  
at the Vermont Judicial Bureau

Elizabeth M. Ready  
Vermont State Auditor  
Issued: August 5, 2002

## **Mission Statement**

*The mission of the State Auditor's Office is to be a catalyst for good government through reliable and accurate financial reporting and by promoting economy, efficiency and effectiveness in State government.*

# Caught in Traffic

State Auditor’s Review of Selected Internal Controls & Procedures  
at the Vermont Judicial Bureau

## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>Moving Forward</b> .....	4
<b>Findings and Recommendations</b> .....	5
<b>Finding 1:</b> Some fines from tickets are not being properly reallocated to communities .....	5
<b>Recommendation 1a:</b> Regular reports about outstanding tickets would be useful to towns .....	6
<b>Recommendation 1b:</b> The Court Administrator’s Office should convene a task force .....	6
<b>Recommendation 1c:</b> The Court Administrator’s Office should consider creating stronger protocols ..	7
<b>Finding 2:</b> Payment to towns do not detail each traffic ticket that comprises the check .....	7
<b>Sidebar:</b> Navigating TRAFFIC .....	8
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Law enforcement agencies should receive detailed reports with payments .....	9
<b>Finding 3:</b> A lack of computer integration causes duplication of data-processing efforts .....	9
<b>Recommendation 3:</b> Public safety and court computer systems should be better linked .....	10
<b>Sidebar:</b> The Life of a Traffic Ticket .....	11

## Appendices

**Appendix A:** Purpose, Authority, Scope & Methodology

**Appendix B:** Background

**Appendix C:** Overview: Internal Controls

**Appendix D:** Court Administrator’s Responses to Draft Review

**Appendix E:** Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police and the Vermont Sheriffs’ Association  
Responses to Draft Review

---

## The Promise of IT

In recent months, our Office has issued a Special Review of the State's oversight and development of Information Technology systems, as well as a high-level assessment of the State's security and data recovery policies.

As we found in this report, the State is not always making the most of its investments in information technology. By using reporting functions and enhancing the ability of users to access key data, the State could increase customer satisfaction and save money on duplicative services.

These reports, *Wiring Vermont's Future* and *Securing the Enterprise*, are available on our website: [www.state.vt.us/sao](http://www.state.vt.us/sao).

# Executive Summary

Vermonters rely upon local police to keep their communities safe and secure. To accomplish this, police departments tap a variety of resources to pay for their efforts, including fines received from issuing traffic tickets. Public officials are constantly looking for the best ways to provide crucial government services - every penny counts, and citizens hold them accountable for each penny spent.

The Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police and the Vermont Sheriffs' Association contacted our Office with concerns about the underpayment of traffic fines from the Vermont Judicial Bureau, and requested that we review its accounting and operations.

Our Office found that the Vermont Judicial Bureau, while doing an excellent job of processing the vast majority of fines it receives, has not returned all fines collected from local police and sheriffs' departments. From January 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001 these undisbursed fines amounted to \$46,187, according to Bureau financial reports. An additional \$5,811 was not allocated to a special fund that disburses money between the State and local towns. While this is only a fraction of the money returned to towns annually, it is significant to some communities.

All of the ticket information coming to the Bureau, located in White River Junction, comes in via mail, and is then entered manually into the court's computer system. From there, the ticket information is maintained and the hard copy of the ticket is filed.

For example, the Addison County Sheriff's Department issued a ticket on June 12, 2000 to a driver for speeding in Monkton. The person who was issued the ticket paid the \$192 fine to the Bureau on June 19, 2000 and the Sheriff's Department sent in their ticket information on July 12, 2000. The person overpaid the fine by \$5, and a check was issued for the overpayment to the individual in January 2001. The collected fine of \$174.50, however, had not been sent to Monkton as of November 19, 2001. The fine due Monkton was \$174.50.

Disbursements to towns sometimes fail to occur when a person pays the ticket fine *before* the Bureau receives or processes the police officer's copy of the ticket. The money is reallocated to towns from a special hold account, or to the Transportation Fund, when the officer's copy of the ticket is processed.

Our Office found that the Bureau did not regularly analyze this account at the time this Review was conducted to ensure all tickets are properly reallocated to local towns, or other State funds. The Court Administrator's Office, as a result of our findings, now analyzes these accounts regularly.

Additionally, the Bureau could improve the reports that accompany the monthly payments to towns; the reports do not list the tickets that comprise the payments. Checks are mailed monthly from the Treasurer's Office in Montpelier. In addition, the Court Administrator's Office mails out details to support these checks in a separate envelope - also from Montpelier. This lack of coordination hampers the ability of local police chiefs and other town officials to verify that the tickets they write are being processed properly, and that their officers are filing their tickets with the Bureau in a timely manner.

To make this system more efficient and effective, our Office recommends the following changes:

- *The Vermont Judicial Bureau should provide regular - monthly or bi-monthly - reports about any tickets that have been sent to the Bureau, for which the Bureau has not yet received town paperwork. This will likely result in more prompt repayment of the fines to local jurisdictions;*
- *The Court Administrator's Office should establish a working group with members of the Sheriffs' and Police Chiefs' associations to determine how the Bureau could improve its reports; and,*
- *The Court Administrator's Office should provide law enforcement agencies with one detailed monthly report of tickets that shows each monthly payment along with the monthly check. This will offer supervisors and chiefs of police with the necessary data to account for, and track, the disposition of each ticket that was written.*

The Court Administrator's Office noted in its response to a draft of this review that some of these recommendations are already underway as a result of our report's findings. This is a strong sign that government can be responsive to the needs of its consumers and improve overall performance.

## Moving Forward

Our Office believes the problems experienced by local law enforcement agencies and county sheriff's departments could be addressed through better communication between the Court Administrator's Office and the law enforcement community. A smarter use of existing computer software and technology could strengthen the Court's ability to provide more useful reports to local officials.

Performance-based and results-oriented budgeting could be used to gauge success at the Bureau. The basics of results and performance accountability include:

- Establishing indicators and using results to drive decision-making, and budgeting;
- Establishing performance measures for programs and agencies, and using performance measures to improve performance; and,
- Linking program accountability with cross-community accountability.

To meet the challenges of providing services and meeting budget targets, it is useful to identify:

- Customers;
- Measures to determine if customers are better off;
- Measures to determine if services are well delivered;
- Baselines to determine how you are doing on these measures;
- Partners that help you do better;
- What works, what could work better; and,
- What are the next steps you need to take to make it work.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth M. Ready  
State Auditor

# Office of the State Auditor's Review of the Vermont Judicial Bureau

## Findings & Recommendations

---

### *Finding 1*

***The Vermont Judicial Bureau failed to reallocate to local communities some fines deposited to its over-credit account in cases where the local police department submitted their copies of the ticket after the motorist.***

### *Discussion*

During test work we reviewed reports of tickets issued in several communities to compare them against reports provided by the Bureau's TRAFFIC Case Management System. (See "Navigating Traffic" on page 8 for a description of this system.)

The Bureau's computer system appears to keep an accurate account of all tickets issued, records of when a ticket has been paid, if a fine is outstanding, and if the issuing local department or agency has sent the Bureau its copy of the ticket.

When a person pays the fine before the officer sends in his or her portion of a ticket, the collected fine is deposited and assigned to the Bureau's "over-credit account." In several instances we found that money allocated to this account was not being properly reallocated to local towns once the officer sent in his or her copy of the ticket or the defendant paid the fine.

A test report run for this Office which analyzed the over-credit account for the month of January, 2001 showed a statewide total of 330 tickets assigned to the account with a balance of \$11,833.

Of this \$11,833, \$4,703 should have been reimbursed to towns for local speeding violations. In each of these cases, a judgment had been entered and the Bureau had received a copy of the ticket from the issuing officer. An additional \$660 was being held for local towns because the issuing officer had not yet filed his or her copy of the ticket. Much of the remaining balance in this account was due to the State for other offenses, but had not been reallocated to the Transportation Fund.

The State and local cities and towns share the fines received from some tickets on certain state highways that pass through a community. These shared fines are accounted for separately. These violations run the gamut from excessive speed to trailer truck infractions. In the January 2001 report there was \$300 assigned to the over-credit account that should have been recorded in the shared account. Of the four tickets that comprised this \$300, the issuing officer had sent the Bureau a copy of each ticket. A separate statewide review of tickets assigned to the over-credit account from January 1, 2001 to June 30, 2001 found the following:

- A total of \$66,171 was assigned to this account, of which \$40,905 was owed to the Transportation Fund;
- Of this amount, \$19,334 was due to local towns from local speeding violations, and \$2,151 was due to the state-local share account (in cases where tickets were submitted by the issuing officer), but not yet allocated; and,

- An additional \$3,205 was due to local towns from local speeding violations, but the Bureau had not received a copy of the ticket from the issuing officer; for the local-state share amount, \$576 was due for the same reason.

My Office then asked for a report of statewide ticket activity in the over-credit account for calendar year 2000. That review found the following:

- A total of \$114,646 assigned to the account, of which \$73,404 was owed to the Transportation Fund;
- Of this amount, \$26,853 was due to local towns from local speeding violations, and \$3,660 was due to the state-local share account, but not yet allocated; and,
- An additional \$8,528 in fines was due to local towns from local speeding violations, but the Bureau had not received copies of the tickets from the issuing officers; for the local-state share amount, \$2,201 was due for the same reason.

In some instances where local agencies had not yet sent the Bureau their portion of the original ticket, the Bureau notified those agencies that they had not handed in their portion of the ticket. In other cases the Bureau did not provide notification. Bureau staff indicated that whether they sent a notice depends on available staff to review records, write up a report and mail out notices.

When an offender pays a ticket, but the issuing officer has not sent in his or her portion of the ticket, no points are assessed against the individual's driver's license. Points are not assessed until the issuing officer returns the ticket to the Judicial Bureau. In the isolated cases of a department misplacing a batch of tickets for six months or a year, or longer, not assessing points against the driver's license could adversely affect the driver and public safety.

***Recommendation 1a***

***Regular Judicial Bureau reports offering details about all outstanding tickets (ones for which a person has paid a fine but no officer's copy has been received) could be useful to local police departments. These reports would allow local Chiefs of Police to track the timeliness in which their agency delivers its portions of the tickets to the Bureau, and help to see that points are assessed against an offender's license in a timely manner. Such reports would be public information and should also be made available to the public.***

***Recommendation 1b***

***The Court Administrator's Office should establish a task force with members of the Sheriffs' and Police Chiefs' associations, as well as representatives of the public, to determine if there are alternate ways the Judicial Bureau could provide reports. One potential option would be to allow law enforcement agencies on-demand, privileged access to the Judicial Bureau's data warehouse.***

### ***Recommendation 1c***

***The Court Administrator may wish to recommend that the State Legislature consider establishing a limit as to how long the Judicial Bureau should hold a payment in the over-credit account while waiting for a local police department to send in ticket information. A time limit would encourage local departments to send traffic ticket information to the Judicial Bureau in a timely manner, rather than face having the ticket dismissed and losing the repayment.***

### ***Finding 2***

***Due to the state's new VISION financial management system, reimbursement checks approved by the Court Administrator's Office are automatically mailed to local town treasurers or law enforcement agencies from the State without a detailed accounting of each traffic ticket that comprises the payment, as was the case in the system prior to July 1, 2001 when VISION became operational.***

***The backup reports with the detailed ticket information are now mailed to town treasurers or police departments under separate cover. Poor communication at the town level can delay the local ticket reconciliation process.***

### ***Discussion***

To ensure accountability, and to allow law enforcement agencies to independently verify and audit payments, the Court Administrator's Office, prior to July 1, 2001, provided a detailed list of each ticket that made up the monthly payment to that agency.

The system changed on July 1, 2001 with the introduction of VISION, the automated financial management system in state government. The financial services division of the Court Administrator in Montpelier begins the reimbursement process by accessing the Judicial Bureau computer to generate an up-to-date report on what waiver penalties and fines are due to each town or police department.

This payment information is entered into the VISION system and the Department of Finance and Management produces and mails the checks to the various town treasurers or police departments. The information memo with the check includes the check number, the date of the check, the town or agency receiving the check, a vendor number and a total amount paid. Under separate cover, usually within two to four days of entering the payment data in the VISION system, the detailed backup ticket information that generated the payment is sent to the town treasurers or police chiefs under separate cover by the financial services division of the Court Administrator's Office.

This supporting documentation allows local law enforcement agencies to reconcile the amount received against the tickets they issued.

According to the finance manager of the Judiciary, Carol Harrison, this system is now working well. Occasionally there is a lack of communication between a town treasurer and the police department. Some towns have requested that detailed backup information be sent directly to the Chief of Police rather than the town treasurer.

*continued on page 9*

## Navigating TRAFFIC

**W**ith much of the information regarding traffic tickets stored electronically, this Office chose to perform a limited review of the two major information technology (IT) systems employed by the Judicial Bureau and local law enforcement agencies.

Millions of public dollars have been invested in recent years to upgrade and maintain information technology systems for the Judiciary and the Department of Public Safety. Part of this Office's ongoing assessment in each of its recent reviews is to examine the impact that IT integration can have on the coordination of public services and better utilization of public resources.

TRAFFIC is a case management system developed by Relational Semantics of Watertown, Massachusetts in 1990. Since then it has been maintained and enhanced in-house by the Research and Information Services Division of the Court Administrator's Office.

This system does the following:

- Keeps a record of all events in the life of each case;
- Does accounting, scheduling of hearings, reporting, forms-generation; and
- Allows the Bureau to manage the caseload in a "paperless" system.

This does not mean there is no paper in this process. For example, when correspondence is received the data is entered into the computer, the paper is then filed chronologically and generally never accessed again. In most courts, a case file is set up for each case and all related documents are filed together.

TRAFFIC allows Bureau staff to access and maintain all case files on its computer system. The architecture of the TRAFFIC application is based on the concept of events. Events are chronologically sequenced entries in the event



---

*Millions of dollars have been invested recently to upgrade and maintain information technology systems for the judiciary and public safety.*

---

table of the TRAFFIC database, and they document significant occurrences during case processing.

A review of printouts for a select group of tickets revealed that reports of phone conversations with defendants or their guardians, mailed correspondence (including payment dates and amounts), hearing dates being set or motions filed, as well as detailed descriptions of adjudication (if charges are contested and fines or charges are waived or reduced) are kept in these event logs.

At the end of the day, TRAFFIC automatically generates two lists that are sent to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

One is a compliance list for all payments received on complaints where the Court had requested a license suspension. The second is a list of all judgments, which ensures that the proper points are assessed against an individual's license. This system ensures the most up-to-date information on a person's eligibility to drive is available to law enforcement officials.

## ***Recommendation 2***

***The Court Administrator's Office should provide law enforcement agencies with one detailed report of tickets that comprise each monthly payment in as timely a manner as possible. This will offer treasurers and chiefs of police the necessary data to account for, and track, the disposition of each ticket written. The Court Administrator's Office should review the feasibility of re-instituting the system whereby the payment check and backup information reports are mailed together to town treasurers or police chiefs.***

***These reports should include the following information:***

- ***The original ticket number,***
- ***The name of the issuing agency;***
- ***The ticket status;***
- ***The penalty amount (including any balance due and surcharges);***
- ***The amount being sent back to the local agency; and these two new information fields:***
  - ***The judicial status for any unpaid violation; and,***
  - ***The traffic ticket fines paid by the defendant but still in need of an officer's copy of the ticket.***

## ***Finding 3***

***A lack of computer integration between the Judicial Bureau and the Department of Public Safety information systems causes duplication of data-processing efforts.***

### ***Discussion***

Staff at the Judicial Bureau open a new computer file in the Bureau's database when it receives a fine or "waiver penalty" payment from a citizen, or ticket information from a local police officer or department.

At local police departments, each officer is responsible for logging ticket information into the state Department of Public Safety computer network, including the resolution of any ticket. This system allows for two separate areas where information must be manually entered into different computer systems that are not linked and cannot share data.

At the end of each business day, the Judicial Bureau computer automatically sends a judgment report to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in Montpelier which ensures that the proper points are assessed against an individual's license. DMV uses this information to then issue license suspensions, or, in the cases where people do not contest the ticket, assess points against that individual's license. A separate compliance report, which is a list for all payments received on complaints where the Court had requested a license suspension, is compiled by Bureau staff and faxed daily to DMV.

Because of incompatible computer systems, no such reports are sent electronically to law enforcement agencies connected to the computer network administered by the Department of Public Safety. Instead, the current way that the Judicial Bureau “talks” to public safety officers is through printed reports.

The Court Administrator’s Office, along with officials from the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Department of Public Safety have been holding regular discussions about the most efficient, secure and reliable way to share information electronically. These discussions, according to the Court officials, do not include the traffic ticket information developed by the Vermont Judicial Bureau.

Once a ticket is paid and the case is resolved, the individual officer or supervisor is informed of the matter through the detailed check backup data sent by the Court Administrator’s Office. The officer or supervisor must then manually update the Public Safety database. Officers receive information from the Judicial Bureau once a ticket is paid or, if the ticket is contested, when a hearing officer renders a judgment.

## Payment Delays

In one case, the Shelburne Police Department issued a speeding ticket to an individual. The individual contested the ticket, and eventually was found guilty in a judgment dated December 31, 2000.

The individual paid the ticket on January 5, 2001. The judgment against this person was not entered into the Bureau’s computer system until January 9, 2001. As of November 19, 2001 the collected fine of \$202 had not been allocated to Shelburne.

### ***Recommendation 3***

***The Vermont Judicial Bureau and the Department of Public Safety should work with “consumers” such the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police, the Vermont Sheriffs’ Association, and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to develop new computer systems or links that can reduce data-processing tasks and labor for both the Judicial Bureau and local police officers.***

## The Life of a Traffic Ticket

**T**raffic tickets are initially bound in books of ten, and mailed to law enforcement offices from White River Junction - the home of the Vermont Judicial Bureau.

When they arrive at a local public safety office a number of things can happen. Most departments log their arrival in a ledger that keeps track of which tickets have arrived and to which officer those tickets were assigned.

The book, with tickets in quadruplicate, then gets into the hand of the public safety officer. Upon issuing a ticket, the officer hands two copies to the offender (one to keep and one to file his or her answer with the Court), keeps one copy for his department's records and has the final copy mailed to the Vermont Judicial Bureau in White River Junction.

All traffic tickets issued in Vermont get routed to the Vermont Judicial Bureau - whether they are a local or state violation. People no longer send their traffic ticket payments to the town where they received the ticket.

Now split into three, the traffic ticket can take on a life of its own. If a person does not contest the ticket, he or she sends in their payment to the Traffic Bureau in White River Junction. The Bureau often receives these payments before the officer who wrote the ticket sends in their portion. Many public safety departments wait to send in their tickets in large batches - 20 to 100 tickets at a time.

When a payment is received and deposited, the Bureau creates a file to track the payment, but the ticket information is not matched to the payment until the officer's portion is received. The money paid on these quickly-received tickets is assigned to a special hold account maintained by the Court Administrator's Office. All



---

***Once a ticket and its fine have been matched, the Vermont Judicial Bureau's computer system sends an electronic report to the Department of Motor Vehicles that logs points against a person's license or authorized a suspension.***

---

---

other fines, ones that can be matched with a ticket, are deposited and transferred to either the Transportation Fund, other special State funds, or are paid to local towns.

Once a ticket and its fine have been matched, the Bureau's computer system automatically produces a report that is sent electronically to the Department of Motor Vehicles to log points on driver's licenses and to report any license suspensions.

In the case where a ticket is not matched with a fine, points are not assessed - even though the fine has been paid and the defendant may be under the impression that the points have been assessed against his or her license. In some cases, if an officer misplaces a ticket or book of tickets, the fines associated with those tickets are assessed and kept in the special holding account, but points are never assessed against the license.

# Appendix A

## Purpose

The Office of the State Auditor has conducted a limited review of the Vermont Judicial Bureau, which processes and adjudicates tickets issued by various law enforcement agencies. The Office was asked to determine if the Judicial Bureau's internal controls were adequate to ensure that the full amount due to local communities was being reallocated, and the reports generated for local communities were accurate and provided relevant information for their auditing purposes.

This limited scope review was initiated at the request of the Vermont Sheriffs' Association and the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police.

## Authority

This review was conducted pursuant to the State Auditor's authority contained in 32 VSA §§ 163 and 167.

## Scope & Methodology

The scope of the review was limited to addressing the specific requests of the Vermont Sheriffs' and Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police. Included in our review was an evaluation of the Judicial Bureau's software to track all tickets, its key internal controls and procedures, and its ability to produce reports that track the adjudication of offenses and disbursement of funds to municipalities.

The methodology involved a review of relevant statutes, regulations, internal policies and procedures to determine the Bureau's effectiveness. Our test work included a review of tickets recorded at the Bureau for a limited time period, as well as a review of tickets recorded at several police departments for the same period. In the case of discrepancies, copies of the original ticket (as issued by the police department or received by the Bureau) were requested to ensure the information was properly entered into the respective computer network.

A review differs substantially from an audit conducted in accordance with applicable professional standards. The purpose of an audit is to express an opinion. The purpose of a review is to identify findings and observations and to make recommendations so that the reviewed agency can better accomplish its mission and more fully comply with laws, regulations, and grant requirements. This review relied upon representations of, and information provided by the staff of the Court Administrator's Office, the Vermont Judicial Bureau as well as representatives of the Sheriffs' and Police Chiefs' organizations. If an audit had been performed, the findings and recommendations may or may not have differed.

# Appendix B

## Background

The Vermont Judicial Bureau, located in White River Junction, is managed by the Vermont Court Administrator's Office in Montpelier. The Judicial Bureau was formerly known as the Vermont Traffic Bureau. The Legislature created the Vermont Judicial Bureau in 1997 (4 VSA §1102), making it the central adjudicator for all:

- Traffic violations;
- Civil ordinance violations;
- Minor fish and wildlife violations;
- Laws pertaining to minor possession of alcohol and tobacco;
- Violations related to littering, and illegal dumping;
- Hazing;
- The unauthorized disclosure of criminal record information; and,
- The selling of alcohol to a minor during a compliance check.

The Legislature also empowered hearing officers to determine waiver penalties (often referred to as "fines") imposed for violations within the Bureau's jurisdiction, while municipalities adopt penalties for civil ordinance violations (pursuant to 24 VSA § 1979). (Waiver penalties are the amounts paid by violators to waive a court appearance to answer charges regarding the speeding or other infraction.) Hearing officers also preside at the sessions where speeders and others contest their charges; they are appointed by the Administrative Judge Francis McCaffrey.

The Judicial Bureau is responsible for processing the roughly 100,000 traffic tickets issued by state and local law enforcement agencies annually, most of which are speeding tickets.

The Bureau is also responsible for processing an estimated 2,500 municipal ordinance violations and 500 fish and wildlife violations each year, along with the other violations listed above. Of the tickets processed by the Bureau, roughly 18 percent are contested.

A surcharge of \$20.50 on all moving violations is used to fund law enforcement training and victims' programs. When a person contests a ticket, a \$10 filing fee is added to the penalty. That money goes to the Court.

Fines received from speeders and other defendants are deposited daily, with amounts typically ranging from \$30,000 to \$45,000. In an average year, the Bureau takes in about \$10 million from an estimated 39,000 people who choose not to contest their traffic tickets or ordinance violations, and from the 23,000 people who receive default judgments for failing to respond to their tickets on time. Credit card payments are not accepted.

The number of new or reopened traffic complaints increased by 5.4 percent in Fiscal Year 2000 from Fiscal Year 1999, according to the Bureau. (Vermont court rules allow a person to petition to re-open a complaint after a judgment is delivered, due to issues such as "mistakes, excusable neglect, newly discovered evidence, inadvertence, or fraud.") In fiscal year 1999, the Bureau reported a filing increase of 4.4 percent from the previous fiscal year.

The Bureau staff currently includes four hearing officers, 11 clerical employees, two court officers, one director, and one vacant court officer position. Hearing officers, along with some Assistant Judges, hear and decide the contested tickets issued within any given county, although all payments and correspondence are sent to White River Junction.

# Appendix C

## Internal Controls

Mail is picked up daily at the post office by staff. Batches of new complaints are filed, separated and logged into the Bureau's computer system and assigned a batch number. On any given day, two to three staff open and sort all other mail received by the Bureau into the following processing categories:

- Payments;
- Contested pleas;
- Motions; and,
- Miscellaneous correspondence.

One staff person records all payments in the Bureau's computer system, known as Traffic. Once payments are processed, another staff person prepares the deposit for the day. Cash is processed and counted by the person receiving it at the counter, then by the person processing payments, then counted by the person doing the deposit and then counted again by the supervisor. This system ensures that all cash is handled appropriately and there are adequate checks and balances, along with segregation of duties, in an office that processes a total of \$30,000 to \$45,000 of payments per day.

In a typical year, the Bureau takes in roughly \$10 million from an estimated 39,000 people who choose not to contest their traffic tickets or ordinance violations and from the 23,000 people who receive default judgments for failing to respond to their tickets.

Police departments send their tickets to the Bureau in bundled batches. These are processed with the oldest file date first. It is the job of one staff person to record each of the batch slips in a log. This log includes the date the batch was received, from which department - along with its unique code - and how many tickets were in the batch.

Two staff people spend part of their day entering in all tickets received from police officers, while two others handle tickets sent in by defendants. These duties are often rotated among staff to ensure that one person is not responsible for only one portion of the system.

Other duties at the Bureau are also segregated. A staff member enters all contested pleas received at the Bureau. Motions are reviewed, docketed and forwarded to the appropriate judge if necessary. Miscellaneous correspondence is docketed and responded to as necessary.

During a site visit on November 16, 2001 Bureau staff were, in the estimation of the Bureau's administrator, two weeks behind with the input of ticket information from defendants and police officers. Checks received by defendants are deposited daily, despite the backlog of tickets. Batches of tickets were bundled by the day received and sat in wire baskets waiting to be input into the Bureau's computer system by staff. Overnight, these baskets of tickets are stored at the workstation of the employee responsible for inputting the data - not in a locked vault.

As the ticket batches come into the Bureau from police departments, each batch is logged into a binder with a list of each ticket, the issuing agency and the total number of tickets in each batch. The Bureau compiles the total daily ticket tally in a separate column. During a visit on November 16, 2001 the following batch volume had been registered for the previous week: November 16 - 252; November 15 - 572; November 14 - 449; November 13 - 749, and November 9 - 285.

All departments and law enforcement officers are issued identifying numbers that must be on each complaint filed with the Bureau. Complaints, in books of ten, are issued to departments. The Bureau maintains a log of which department is issued each ticket batch.

A compliance report is run at the end of the day and sent to the Department of Motor Vehicles for all payments received for complaints where the Court has requested a suspension of the defendant's privilege to operate a vehicle. Judgments are sent electronically to the Department of Motor Vehicles during the evening. Default judgments are run and printed daily, with letters sent to the defendants. If a person refuses to pay, the State adds a \$10 filing fee to the fine.

# Appendix D

**SUPREME COURT OF VERMONT  
OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR**

**LEE SUSKIN, ESQ.**

Court Administrator  
*lee.suskin@state.vt.us*

Telephone: (802) 828-3278  
FAX: (802) 828-3457  
TDD: (802) 828-3234

109 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05609-0701  
[www.vermontjudiciary.org](http://www.vermontjudiciary.org)

**SALLY FOX, ESQ.**

Director - Family Court Operations  
*sally.fox@state.vt.us*

**ROBERT GREEMORE**

Director - Administrative Services  
*bob.greemore@state.vt.us*

**CATHERINE RACHLIN**

Director - Judicial Education  
*catherine.rachlin@state.vt.us*

**ROBERT SQUIRES**

Director - Research & Info. Services  
*bob.squires@state.vt.us*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Elizabeth M. Ready, Auditor of Accounts

FROM: Bob Greemore

RE: Judicial Bureau Review

DATE: July 16, 2002

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the redraft of the review of the Judicial Bureau conducted by your office. Again, we emphasize that we are pleased with the renewal of the audit review of Judicial Branch programs. The comments of your staff are very helpful and beneficial to the operations of the Judiciary.

We appreciate your office's attention to our response to the initial report and the editing that was incorporated in your final product. Again we are happy that your review points out what a great job the Bureau has done. The Bureau has processed over 985,000 tickets since its inception in 1990 and your findings have allowed us to identify 4,400 tickets for which the final processing steps had not been taken. This translates to 99.6% of the work being processed successfully. By the end of May, the staff had completed the processing of the identified tickets and after the May financial reports were run in June, all revenues have been properly distributed among the state and local agencies.

Again, thank you for your review. It pointed out a weakness in the current system which has been addressed. The vote of confidence in our internal procedures and controls was reassuring.

## Attachment of Memo

May 27, 2002

To: Lee Suskin, Robert Greemore, Robert Squires

From: Dean T. Martin

Subject: Draft Report on the Vermont Judicial Bureau

I have reviewed the draft report from the Auditor's office and have found it to be close to the mark relative to most of the issues identified. I do have a few areas that I feel that a misinterpretation of what actually occurs or what actually is provided for by statute and rule are in need of correction or clarification. I also would like to respond to the issues relative to the over credit account and the providing of access to law enforcement to our data.

The following are the areas in which I identified possible misunderstandings:

Page 2: the \$10.00 is a filing fee

Page 3: there are 11 clerical employees, 2 court officers, and 1 vacant court officer position

Page 4: at the top of this page the report indicates that a run was done on the January 2001 overcredit account. I would like a copy of this report in order to identify training issues for staff.

Page 5: could we get the complaint number looked at on this page so that a correction can be made

Page 8: paragraph 2 appears to be mixing compliances and judgments together. Compliances are run as a separate report and faxed by staff to DMV at the end of the day. Judgments are sent to DMV electronically during the evening.

paragraph 5 whether or not the officer appears at the hearing a judgment is sent to the department.

Page 9: deposit amount should match that amount indicated on page 2 - \$30,000 to \$45,000 amount of money in paragraph 3, I thought it was closer to 10 million  
paragraph 5, any staff member may enter complaints filed by law enforcement

Page 11 & 12 at the bottom of 11 and top of 12, Judgments are sent electronically to DMV  
Compliances are done as a report being run by a staff person and then faxed to DMV  
the court does not assess points. Points are assessed by DMV based the offense for which judgment was entered.

Page 13 paragraph 3, complaints are issued to departments in quadruplet sets, top copy is filed with the Bureau; 2nd copy, yellow, is kept by the officer; 3rd, pink, is the copy for the defendant to keep; 4th copy is used by the defendant to file his/her answer with the Court.

We are currently working on the report that Jim Baslock ran listing all the cases that had money in the overcredit account. We are moving the monies to the appropriate accounts. I anticipate completing this project by May 28, 2002.

# Appendix E



## CITY OF RUTLAND, VERMONT

### POLICE DEPARTMENT

108 Wales Street  
Rutland, Vermont 05701  
(802) 773-1840



**ANTHONY L. BOSSI**  
*Chief of Police*

June 26, 2002

JUN 27 2002

Elizabeth M. Ready, State Auditor  
State of Vermont  
Office of The State Auditor  
132 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5101

Dear Elizabeth Ready:

The Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police had the opportunity to review and discuss, the State Auditor's Office report on the Vermont Judicial Bureau, at the joint annual meeting of the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police and The Vermont Sheriffs Association, May 23-34, 2002.

Members present at the annual meeting were pleased with the Office of the State Auditor's review of the Vermont Judicial Bureau and recommendations made in the report.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Anthony L. Bossi  
Chief of Police

President Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police

ALB/ch  
ALB: 02-43



**RUTLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**  
P.O. Box 303  
RUTLAND, VERMONT 05702-0303  
802-775-8002

\*\*\*\*\*

*Sheriff R. J. Elrick*

JUL 5 2002

July 1, 2002

Elizabeth M. Ready, State Auditor  
State of Vermont  
Office of the State Auditor  
132 State Street  
Montpelier VT 05633-5101

Dear Ms. Ready:

The Vermont Sheriffs' Association has received and reviewed your office's report on the requested audit of the Vermont Judicial Bureau. This review was conducted at our joint meeting with the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police on May 23-24, 2002.

The members present had no issue with the report or recommendations as presented. On behalf of the Association, I thank you for your efforts to move this audit forward. The outcome came as little surprise to the membership and needed to be validated.

Thanks again for your assistance with this undertaking!

Sincerely,

R. J. Elrick  
Sheriff  
President - Vermont Sheriffs' Association

To obtain additional copies of this report contact:

Elizabeth M. Ready  
State Auditor

Office of the State Auditor  
132 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5101  
(802) 828-2281  
1-877-290-1400 (toll-free in Vermont)  
[auditor@sao.state.vt.us](mailto:auditor@sao.state.vt.us)

This report is also available on our website:  
[www.state.vt.us/sao](http://www.state.vt.us/sao)