



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MDOC COMMISSIONER CAIN RESPONDS TO STATE AUDIT

JACKSON, MS – “Unfortunately based on my review of today’s audit results by Mississippi State Auditor Shad White, I am not entirely surprised at the Auditor’s findings,” said Corrections Commissioner Burl Cain. “Much of the accounting for this massive department was too loose and uncontrolled, and when you’re trying to find money to run 21 prisons to house 17,000 inmates, you need every dollar you can find. That’s why we pointed out many of the findings that now appear in the report and why Governor Reeves asked Mr. White to help us implement better and clearer accountability.”

The 36-page official Audit of the Mississippi Department of Corrections covered the period from July 1, 2017, through December 31, 2019. Among many problem areas, MDOC auditors found inappropriate and possibly illegal payouts to certain previous executive MDOC leadership for alleged compensatory time, or “comp time.” Comp time is considered time off for employees who work over an eight-hour day and can be accumulated over months.

Commissioner Cain said, “If true, the improper accounting leaves us with no way to verify if those employees actually worked all those hours and, if they did not, then that would be the same as stealing money from taxpayers.” Among the report’s findings, State Auditor White stated that one of Commissioner Cain’s predecessors received an illegal buyback of comp time totaling \$109,446, and a Deputy Commissioner received buybacks of \$240,000. The audit also stated that the effect of the additional salaries increased retirement payouts for the two.

In February 2020, MDOC executive auditors flagged the final comp time payout which had been submitted and refused to pay it. As stated in the report by Auditor White, MDOC has worked tirelessly since February to correct most, if not all, issues identified in the report.

“Our management staff has all agreed to set a higher standard,” added Commissioner Cain, “so that taxpayers will have a department on which they can depend for efficient service. Many great people have worked at MDOC for years and they have been very happy to finally be able to make suggestions for improvements. So we have already taken corrective measures, such as:

- “All compensatory payments have been stopped;
- “A full property inventory of MDOC property is being taken;
- “That property which is not needed for operations is being turned over to the state’s surplus agency for disposal;
- “Travel accounting has been returned to the transparency called for by law with far less travel being approved.”

The Commissioner ended by saying, “This is only the beginning. We look forward to working with the state auditor in streamlining our accounting system to better serve everyone involved.”

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