



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

FISCAL CONTROL AUDIT REPORT ON STANLY COUNTY CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT ALBEMARLE, NORTH CAROLINA

FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2002 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2003

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

RALPH CAMPBELL, JR.

STATE AUDITOR

**FISCAL CONTROL AUDIT REPORT ON
STANLY COUNTY CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT
ALBEMARLE, NORTH CAROLINA
FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2002 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2003**

THE HONORABLE DAVID R. FISHER, CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT



Ralph Campbell, Jr.
State Auditor

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
Office of the State Auditor

2 S. Salisbury Street
20601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0601
Telephone: (919) 807-7500
Fax: (919) 807-7647
Internet <http://www.osa.state.nc.us>

AUDITOR'S TRANSMITTAL

The Honorable Michael F. Easley, Governor
The General Assembly of North Carolina
The Honorable David R. Fisher, Clerk of Superior Court

This report presents the results of our fiscal control audit of Stanly County Clerk of Superior Court for the period September 1, 2002 through February 28, 2003. Our work was performed by authority of Article 5A of Chapter 147 of the General Statutes and was conducted in accordance with the standards contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. The objective of the audit was to gather and evaluate evidence about selected internal control policies and procedures designed to ensure reliable financial accounting and reporting and compliance with finance-related laws and regulations.

The results of our tests disclosed no significant weaknesses in internal control or significant instances of noncompliance or abuse which require disclosure under *Government Auditing Standards*.

North Carolina General Statutes require the State Auditor to make audit reports available to the public. Copies of audit reports issued by the Office of the State Auditor may be obtained through one of the options listed in the back of this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ralph Campbell, Jr.".

Ralph Campbell, Jr.
State Auditor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	1
OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS	3
DISTRIBUTION OF AUDIT REPORT	7

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The office of the Clerk of the Superior Court is created by the North Carolina Constitution which mandates that there be a Clerk of Superior Court for each county. Under the constitution, it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to prescribe jurisdiction and the powers of the Clerk. Laws of the General Assembly regarding clerks must be uniformly applicable in every county in the State.

The Clerk of Superior Court is elected for a four-year term by the voters of the county. Clerks are paid by the State, with their salaries scaled in accordance with the population of their counties. The Clerk appoints the assistants, deputies, and employees in his or her office. The number of assistants and deputies that each Clerk may employ varies from county to county depending on the volume of business. Assistant and deputy Clerks are paid on a salary schedule fixed by the Administrative Office of the Courts based on education and years of service in the Clerk's office; the maximum and minimum salaries within that scale are fixed by the General Assembly.

The responsibilities of the Clerk are numerous and varied. The Clerk, as a judicial officer of the Superior Court, has judicial responsibilities. The Clerk is judge of probate, that is, the Clerk handles the probate of wills (proceedings to determine if a paper writing is a valid will) and the administration of estates of decedents, minors, and incompetents. The Clerk also hears a variety of special proceedings such as adoptions, incompetency determinations, and partitions of land and is empowered to issue arrest and search warrants and to exercise the same powers as a magistrate with respect to taking pleas of guilty to minor littering, traffic wildlife, boating, marine fisheries, alcoholic beverage, State park recreation, and worthless-check offenses.

The Clerk has many responsibilities besides judicial ones. The Clerk is responsible for all clerical and record-keeping functions of the Superior Court and District Court. The Clerk operates a unified record-keeping system for all civil actions, special proceedings, estates, criminal actions, juvenile actions, minutes of the Court, judgments, liens, lis pendens, and numerous other records required by law. The Clerk maintains the judgment docket, is custodian of evidence in civil and criminal trials, and issues civil summons and subpoenas. In addition, the Clerk invests money received and held by his or her office in trust and receives and administers insurance or other money on behalf of minors and incapacitated adults.

[This Page Left Blank Intentionally]

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS

OBJECTIVES

As authorized by Article 5A of Chapter 147 of the General Statutes and in accordance with the standards contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, we have conducted a fiscal control audit of the Stanly County Clerk of Superior Court. The objective of the audit was to gather and evaluate evidence about selected internal control policies and procedures designed to ensure reliable financial accounting and reporting and compliance with finance-related laws and regulations for the period September 1, 2002 through February 28, 2003.

Management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal control. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that relevant objectives are achieved. Because of inherent limitations in internal control, errors or fraud may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, projections of any evaluation of internal control to future periods are subject to the risk that conditions may change or compliance with policies and procedures may deteriorate.

SCOPE

Our audit scope included selected internal controls in the following areas:

General

Control Environment - The control environment consists of the actions, policies, and procedures that reflect the overall attitude of top management about control and its importance to the entity. The control environment sets the tone of the organization, influencing the control consciousness of its employees.

Information System Controls - Information system controls include activities that relate to many computerized information system applications and support the effective functioning of application controls. Information system controls include access security and end-user controls.

Financial Accounting and Reporting

Cash and Investment Cycle - The cash and investment cycle generally consists of the activities associated with the custody of cash and investments. Financial statement accounts typically impacted by the cycle include cash, certificates of deposit, and other investments.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Cash Receipts Cycle – The cash receipts cycle generally consists of the activities associated with the receipt of cash. All financial statement accounts are impacted by this cycle.

Cash Disbursements Cycle – The cash disbursements cycle generally consists of the activities associated with disbursing cash for items other than operating and payroll costs. All financial statement accounts are impacted by this cycle.

Finance-Related Compliance

Cash Management and Investments – Laws and regulations set limits on authorized deposits and investments. Moneys are required to be deposited in approved depositories and invested in specific investment types. Accounts must be protected with adequate insurance and collateral. Also, disbursements that are unclaimed by payees for a prescribed time period are often required to be remitted to the State Treasurer in accordance with the State of North Carolina’s Escheats and Abandoned Property Program.

Deposit of Receipts – Laws and regulations require deposit of moneys as soon as possible in order to safeguard assets and to enhance the cash management and investment program. Receipts over a specified amount are required to be deposited on a daily basis.

Annual Financial Reporting – Laws and regulations require preparation of annual financial report information in a prescribed format and within a prescribed timeframe. Financial statement information is required to be filed with the Administrative Office of the Courts timely after year-end.

Case Files – Laws and regulations set record maintenance and security requirements. Records are required to be filed in a secure location using a uniform indexing system.

Costs and Fees – Laws and regulations set costs and fees to be charged. Uniform costs and fees are required to be charged as established by State law.

Special Provisions – Laws and regulations impose specific requirements on particular entities or activities. Partial payment collections are required to be distributed in the order prescribed by State law. Other special provisions include the investment of accounts greater than \$2,000, record retention requirements, property held for safekeeping procedures, and review procedures over monthly aging reports.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND RESULTS (CONCLUDED)

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our audit objective, we gained an understanding of internal control, performed tests of control effectiveness, and performed corroborating direct tests of the accounting records, reports, and/or compliance, as we considered necessary in the circumstances. Specifically, we performed procedures such as interviewing personnel, observing operations, reviewing policies, analyzing accounting records, and examining documentation supporting recorded transactions and balances. Our procedures were more limited than would be necessary to give an opinion on internal control, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

RESULTS

The results of our tests disclosed no significant weaknesses in internal control or significant instances of noncompliance or abuse which require disclosure under *Government Auditing Standards*.

The purpose of this report is to provide management and oversight organizations recommendations needed to improve internal control over financial accounting and reporting and compliance with finance-related laws and regulations. Consequently, reporting on accomplishments in areas that appear to be functioning properly is beyond the scope of this audit.

[This Page Left Blank Intentionally]

DISTRIBUTION OF AUDIT REPORT

In accordance with General Statutes 147-64.5 and 147-64.6(c)(14), copies of this report have been distributed to the public officials listed below. Additional copies are provided to other legislators, state officials, the press, and the general public upon request.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The Honorable Michael F. Easley	Governor of North Carolina
The Honorable Beverly M. Perdue	Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina
The Honorable Richard H. Moore	State Treasurer
The Honorable Roy A. Cooper, III	Attorney General
Mr. David T. McCoy	State Budget Officer
Mr. Robert L. Powell	State Controller

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Honorable David R. Fisher	Stanly County Clerk of Superior Court
The Honorable John M. Kennedy	Director, Administrative Office of the Courts
Mr. Steve Lusk	Deputy Director for Financial Services Division Administrative Office of the Courts

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Appointees to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations

Senator Marc Basnight, Co-Chairman	Representative James B. Black, Co-Chairman
Senator Charlie Albertson	Representative Richard T. Morgan, Co-Chairman
Senator Keever M. Clark	Representative Martha B. Alexander
Senator Daniel G. Clodfelter	Representative E. Nelson Cole
Senator Walter H. Dalton	Representative James W. Crawford, Jr.
Senator James Forrester	Representative William T. Culpepper, III
Senator Linda Garrou	Representative W. Pete Cunningham
Senator Wilbur P. Gulley	Representative Beverly M. Earle
Senator Kay R. Hagan	Representative Stanley H. Fox
Senator David W. Hoyle	Representative R. Phillip Haire
Senator Ellie Kinnaird	Representative Dewey L. Hill
Senator Jeanne H. Lucas	Representative Maggie Jeffus
Senator William N. Martin	Representative Edd Nye
Senator Stephen M. Metcalf	Representative William C. Owens, Jr.
Senator Eric M. Reeves	Representative Drew P. Saunders
Senator Larry Shaw	Representative Wilma M. Sherrill
Senator R. C. Soles, Jr.	Representative Joe P. Tolson
Senator David F. Weinstein	Representative Thomas E. Wright
	Representative Douglas Y. Yongue

Other Legislative Officials

Senator Anthony E. Rand	Majority Leader of the N. C. Senate
Senator Patrick J. Ballantine	Minority Leader of the N. C. Senate
Representative N. Leo Daughtry	N. C. House of Representatives
Mr. James D. Johnson	Director, Fiscal Research Division

April 28, 2003

ORDERING INFORMATION

Copies of this report may be obtained by contacting the:

Office of the State Auditor
State of North Carolina
2 South Salisbury Street
20601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-0601

Internet: <http://www.ncauditor.net>

Telephone: 919/807-7500

Facsimile: 919/807-7647