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7 comments

Louisiana state auditor gets 3 years in federal prison for theft from agency he was charged with monitoring

Delrice Augustus, a state auditor assigned to the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services was sentenced on Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2014, to three years and one month in federal prison for stealing from the agency and misusing federal funds. *(EBRSO)*

Print (http://blog.nola.com/baton_rouge_crime/print.html?entry=/2014/09/louisiana_state_auditor_gets_3.html)
(http://connect.nola.com/staff/emilylane/index.html) By Emily Lane, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune (http://connect.nola.com/staff/emilylane/posts.html)
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on September 24, 2014 at 5:05 PM, updated September 24, 2014 at 5:41 PM

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A state auditor whose job was to detect and prevent theft within the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services was sentenced on Wednesday (Sept. 24) to more than three years in federal prison for doing just that.

Delrice Augustus, 35, of Baton Rouge, had pleaded guilty in May (http://www.nola.com/crime/baton-rouge/index.ssf/2014/05/state_audit_directo[illegible] to using agency funds to purchase personal electronics for his home and pay for trips to New Orleans for Mardi Gras parades and the NBA all-star game.

"It's a sad day when someone whose responsibly it is to safeguard and watch over hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funds is caught

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stealing from the very funds he is entrusted to protect," U.S. Attorney Walt Green said in a statement.

Augustus admitted in federal court to using his state position to defraud DCFS out of between $120,000 and $200,000. Augustus participated in a scheme, which involved a number of other employees (http://www.nola.com/crime/baton-rouge/index.ssf/2014/06/third_state_auditor_pleads_g.html) who have also pleaded guilty, to use fraudulent documents to request and receive reimbursement from the state for official travel that did not occur.

U.S. District Judge Shelley Dick, at the federal courthouse in downtown Baton Rouge, sentenced Augustus to three years and one month in prison, to pay DCFS $155,305 in restitution and to forfeit $150,035 to the United States. Following his incarceration, he'll remain on supervised release for two years.

Augustus' served as director of the bureau of auditing compliance services for the department. He reported directly to the secretary of DCFS, and he led the office responsible for protecting the department's assets, "against theft and unauthorized use; ensuring that transactions were property authorized and recorded properly; and ensuring compliance with management polices...and federal and state laws."

The former auditing director admitted to using agency funds to buy a dishwasher; televisions; movies; cameras; vacuums; wireless audio systems; Xboxes; Leapsters; I-Pads; Kindle Fires; and an I-Phone 5.

He also bought paid for rental vehicles, fuel and hotel rooms for the New Orleans Mardi Gras and NBA events.

The schemes occurred between 2010 and March 2014. In that four-year period, DCFS received more than $1 billion in federal funding, making Augustus eligible for federal prosecution.

Said Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street in a statement: "This sentence should make it clear to anyone thinking about stealing from the taxpayers that they had better be prepared to go to jail for it."

Louisiana State Police Superintendent Col. Mike Edmonson added that law enforcement are committed to holding those in positions of trust to a higher standard.

Kristi Nichols (http://www.doa.louisiana.gov/doa/bio.htm), who currently serves as commissioner of administration for Gov. Bobby Jindal (http://topics.nola.com/tag/bobby-jindal/index.html), was DCFS secretary

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during part of the time Augustus and others conducted their scheme. Augustus answered directly to her until October 2012, when Jindal appointed Nichols (http://www.wafb.com/story/19688242/jindal-announces-new-chief-of-staff-commissioner-of-administration) to her current position.

Green said he commended DCFS leadership for "swift immediate action" when the fraud became known to them, adding, "cooperation with law enforcement is imperative to ensuring that the occasional bad actor is addressed."

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