GOVERNOR



ATTORNEY GENERAL

DANA O. VIOLA FIRST DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 425 QUEEN STREET HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813 (808) 586-1500

December 14, 2020

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi President and Members of the Senate Thirty-First State Legislature State Capitol, Room 409 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives Thirty-First State Legislature State Capitol, Room 431 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the Department of the Attorney General's <u>Report on the Tobacco Enforcement Special</u> <u>Fund pursuant to section 28-15(d)</u>, <u>Hawaii Revised Statutes</u>. In accordance with section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at <u>http://ag.hawaii.gov/publications/reports/reports-to-the</u>legislature/.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 586-1500.

Sincerely, Clare E. Connors Attorney General

c: David Y. Ige, Governor Josh Green, Lieutenant Governor Legislative Reference Bureau (Attn.: Karen Mau) Leslie H. Kondo, State Auditor
Craig K. Hirai, Director of Finance, Department of Budget and Finance Stacey A. Aldrich, State Librarian, Hawaii State Public Library System David Lassner, PhD., President, University of Hawaii

Enclosure



CLARE E. CONNORS ATTORNEY GENERAL

DANA O. VIOLA FIRST DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

DAVID Y. IGE GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN Lt. GOVERNOR

STATE OF HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION - TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT UNIT 425 QUEEN STREET HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813 PH: (808) 586-1203 FAX: (808) 586-0932

EMAIL: atg.tobaccoenforcementunit@hawaii.gov

REPORT ON THE TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT SPECIAL FUND

Pursuant to Section 28-15(d), Hawaii Revised Statutes

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

Submitted to the Thirty-First State Legislature Regular Session of 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

Section 28-15(d), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), requires the Department of the Attorney General (the Department) to submit a report to the Legislature, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session, providing an accounting of the receipts and expenditures of the Tobacco Enforcement Special Fund.

On July 1, 2000, the Department's Tobacco Enforcement Unit (the Unit) was created to enforce the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, the state Tobacco Liability Act, chapter 675, HRS, the state Cigarette Tax and Tobacco Tax Law, chapter 245, HRS, and the state Tobacco Products Reporting Law, chapter 486P, HRS. The Unit is composed of a unit supervisor, a Master Settlement Agreement civil prosecutor, a cigarette tax prosecutor, seven criminal investigators, a legal assistant, and a legal clerk.

II. TOBACCO MASTER SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

A. Background

On November 23, 1998, leading United States tobacco manufacturers entered the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement with forty-six states, including Hawaii. In consideration for a release of past, present, and certain future claims against them, the Master Settlement Agreement obligates these manufacturers to pay substantial sums to the settling states (tied in part to the volume of tobacco product sales). The Attorney General of each settling state is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (hereinafter "Master Settlement Agreement" or "MSA").

B. Master Settlement Agreement Payments

There are three types of MSA payments:

(1) Initial Payments to Hawaii were received annually from January 10, 1999, through January 10, 2003.

Year		Amount of Initial Payment
1999-2000		27,804,177.13
2000-2001		11,659,558.77
2001-2002		12,701,627.03
2002-2003		12,864,378.74
	Total	\$65,029,741.67

(2) Annual Payments to Hawaii began on April 15, 2000, and are scheduled to be received on April 15 of each year in perpetuity.

<u>Year</u>		Amount of Annual Payment
1999-2000		20,811,042.90
2000-2001		24,471,822.21
2001-2002		32,674,220.28
2002-2003		31,845,690.90
2003-2004		37,793,157.48
2004-2005		38,357,998.54
2005-2006		35,212,822.31
2006-2007		36,857,166.01
2007-2008		37,299,996.79
2008-2009		41,132,845.88
2009-2010		34,230,792.73
2010-2011		32,453,603.85
2011-2012		33,096,749.95
2012-2013		33,073,205.78
2013-2014		37,420,086.29
2014-2015		32,022,781.47
2015-2016		33,654,568.07
2016-2017		33,211,083.41
2017-2018		26,149,213.01
2018-2019		34,801,958.14
2019-2020		35,309,044.26
	Total	\$7 <mark>01,879,850.26</mark>

(3) Strategic Contribution Payments to Hawaii began on April 15, 2008, and were received on April 15 of each year through 2017.

<u>Year</u>		Amount of Strategic Contribution
		Payment
2007-2008		18,762,802.27
2008-2009		19,225,534.21
2009-2010		16,691,299.06
2010-2011		15,211,574.73
2011-2012		15,492,087.49
2012-2013		15,505,806.17
2013-2014		15,238,278.95
2014-2015		15,206,293.27
2015-2016		15,612,254.40
2016-2017		<u> </u>
	Total	\$162,484,686.60

In fiscal year (FY) 2019-2020, the State received \$35,309,044.26 in MSA moneys. The total amounts of MSA payments received by Hawaii as of the end of FY 2019-2020 are as follows:

Initial Payments	65,029,741.67		
Annual Payments	701,879,850.26		
Strategic Contribution Payments	162,484,686.60		
2004 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration	58,600,584.78		
Settlement of 2004 to 2017 Diligent			
Enforcement Arbitration issues*			
Total:	\$987,994,863.31		

* Note: For more details on "2004 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration Settlement of 2004 to 2017 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration issues," refer to section II.E. (page 7)

C. Tobacco Liability Act (Chapter 675, HRS)

The Master Settlement Agreement requires the State to diligently enforce the requirements of the "model statute," which was enacted as the Tobacco Liability Act, chapter 675, HRS. The Master Settlement Agreement and the Tobacco Liability Act represent affirmative steps toward holding tobacco manufacturers accountable for the harm caused by the sale of cigarettes to residents of Hawaii. Section 675-1(d), HRS, provides:

It is the policy of the State that financial burdens imposed on the State by cigarette smoking be borne by tobacco product manufacturers rather than by the State to the extent that such manufacturers either determine to enter into a settlement with the State or are found culpable by the courts.

Section 675-1(f), HRS, provides:

It would be contrary to the policy of the State if tobacco product manufacturers who determine not to enter into such a settlement could use a resulting cost advantage to derive large, short-term profits It is thus in the interest of the State to require that such manufacturers establish a reserve fund to guarantee a source of compensation and to prevent such manufacturers from deriving large, short-term profits and then becoming judgment-proof before liability may arise.

The Tobacco Liability Act requires any tobacco product manufacturer selling cigarettes to consumers in Hawaii – whether directly or through a distributor, retailer, or similar intermediary or intermediaries – to either participate in and perform its financial obligations under the Master Settlement Agreement, or place funds in an escrow account to establish a reserve fund to guarantee a source of compensation to the State

if the tobacco product manufacturer is found culpable by the courts. (Section 675-3, HRS). A non-participating manufacturer (NPM) is a tobacco product manufacturer who has not entered into the Master Settlement Agreement.

NPMs who fail to comply with the escrow requirements enjoy a price advantage over those who comply. This price advantage lures consumers away from and decreases the market share of participating manufacturers (PM). In a recent MSA disbursement, the amounts due to the states were reduced because of a national increase in NPM market share.

D. Enforcement

Failure to diligently enforce the Tobacco Liability Act may result in a state losing a significant portion of its MSA payments. "Diligent enforcement" in the context of the MSA enforcement had not been clearly defined, and was the subject of the lengthy 2003 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration (2003 DE Arbitration), which began in 2010 and concluded in 2013. In the 2003 DE Arbitration, the panel concluded that diligent enforcement was an ongoing and intentional consideration of the requirements of a settling state's qualifying statute and a significant attempt by a settling state to meet those requirements, taking into account a settling state's competing laws and policies that may conflict with its MSA contractual obligations. The factors considered by the 2003 panel included: collection rate, lawsuits filed, gathering reliable data, resources allocated to enforcement, preventing non-compliant NPMs from future sales, legislation enacted, actions short of legislation, and efforts to be aware of National Association of Attorneys General and other states' enforcement efforts.

The 2003 arbitration panel on the issue of what constitutes "Units Sold" determined that, "as a matter of law", the model statute definition of "Units Sold" is unambiguous and binding." "Units Sold" is defined in Exhibit T to the MSA as follows:

"Units Sold" means the number of individual cigarettes sold in the State by the applicable tobacco product manufacturer (whether directly or through a distributor, retailer, or similar intermediary or intermediaries) during the year in question, <u>as measured by excise taxes collected by the State on packs (or "roll-your-own" tobacco containers) bearing the excise tax stamp of the State [Emphasis added.]</u>

Simply put, the 2003 DE Arbitration panel held that a state's obligation to collect escrow was limited to the NPM cigarettes that could be measured by packs bearing the excise tax stamp of a state.

Hawaii's diligent enforcement efforts and regulatory scheme include identifying NPMs and the number of NPM cigarettes sold in Hawaii in each calendar year; notifying NPMs of their obligation to establish and fund an escrow in accordance with chapter 675; and as necessary filing complaints in court against NPMs who fail to comply with

chapter 675. The Department has developed a system that:

- (1) Identifies NPMs and their products;
- (2) Gathers and tracks information on NPM products;
- Notifies NPMs of their obligations under the Tobacco Liability Act, Tobacco Products Reporting Law, and related statutes (the Department sends letters to tobacco product manufacturers worldwide to advise them of these obligations);
- (4) Provides assistance to effectuate compliance;
- (5) Supplies relevant information that allows the Attorney General to file lawsuits as necessary to compel compliance with the escrow statutes; and
- (6) Provides the information-gathering and certification protocols necessary to establish and publish the directory of tobacco product manufacturers whose cigarettes and Roll-Your-Own (RYO) tobacco products are authorized for sale in Hawaii.

In 2003, the Unit created a directory of compliant cigarettes and RYO tobacco products. The directory has been posted on the Department's website since October 31, 2003, and was revised and updated in FY 2019-2020. At the end of FY 2019-2020, 16 compliant tobacco product manufacturers (16 PMs and 0 NPMs) were listed in the directory, along with a list of 95 authorized brands of cigarettes and RYO tobacco products.

Further, the directory, in conjunction with the Tobacco Products Reporting Law, chapter 486P, HRS, facilitates the time-consuming process of identifying individual manufacturers and their respective brands. When a tobacco product manufacturer is identified as having or intending to have sales in Hawaii, the Unit notifies the tobacco product manufacturer that it must comply with chapter 486P, including the requirement to register with the Department pursuant to section 486P-5, HRS.

The Unit provides a reporting form to wholesalers and distributors and gathers information from the wholesalers and distributors' responses and invoices. Based on this information, the Unit verifies that only compliant NPMs and their brands are sold (directly or through distributors, retailers, or similar intermediaries) in Hawaii. In addition, by investigating cigarette brands on store shelves, the Unit verifies that only compliant NPMs and their authorized brands are stamped and sold in Hawaii.

The Unit sends formal demands to NPMs that have sales in Hawaii, requiring that they place appropriate sums in a qualified escrow fund in compliance with the Tobacco Liability Act. In FY 2019-2020, there were no NPM sales, and therefore no escrow payments were required to be made.

E. 2004 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration

As noted above, failure to diligently enforce the Tobacco Liability Act may result in a state losing a significant portion of its MSA payments. After nearly two years of pretrial litigation and extensive discovery, the PMs affirmatively challenged the State of Hawaii's Diligent Enforcement for the calendar year 2004. The State of Hawaii's Arbitration was scheduled to begin in August of 2018. With the assistance of outside counsel, in 2018 the State and nine other states reached a settlement with the PMs, which resolved the Diligent Enforcement Arbitration Issues for the years 2004 through and including 2017. The 2018 settlement agreement spared the State the cost and uncertainty of ongoing and protracted arbitrations. It was estimated that had the matter gone to arbitration for the challenge to the State's diligent enforcement in 2004 alone it could have cost the State approximately \$1.5 million dollars in litigation costs¹.

As mentioned above, the State reached an agreement with the tobacco industry that settled the Diligent Enforcement arbitration issues for the years 2004 through and including 2017. The settlement amount of \$58,600,584.78 was received by the State on April 19, 2018. Outside litigation costs totaled approximately, \$189,000.00. In the 2018 settlement agreement, Hawaii and nine other states joined twenty-five other states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, a group that had previously entered into a settlement with the PMs. Nine states are still involved in the 2004 arbitration.

After the 2018 settlement agreement, the State still faced potential liability for future years of diligent enforcement arbitration from 2018 and into the future. If the State did not settle years 2018 through 2022, Hawaii would have faced an estimated maximum exposure ranging from \$17.5 million to \$21.2 million per year in lost MSA payments - comprising over half of the payments Hawaii could expect to receive in each year. On March 12, 2020, a condition of the 2018 settlement agreement was met, which automatically settled the years 2018-2019 for Hawaii and eight other states (collectively known as the Tranche E group), thus protecting Hawaii from the risk of arbitration for diligent enforcement in those years. For the settled years called "transition years", the Tranche E states retain 75% of the disputed payment amount, while the PMs receive a 25% credit. On July 31, 2020, Hawaii notified PM counsel and the National Association of Attorneys General that it joined the other Tranche E states in opting to treat years 2020-2022 as transition years, another option available to all Tranche E states as part of the 2018 settlement agreement. This option protects Hawaii from the risk of arbitration through 2022. Also, on July 31, 2020, Hawaii entered into the 2018 Through 2022 NPM Adjustments Settlement Agreement with the PMs, which gives Hawaii additional benefits and protections for potential arbitration in the future. For this

¹ Had the State prevailed in the 2004 Diligent Enforcement Arbitration, Hawaii would have received \$4,648,059.24, the amount withheld by the industry from the industry's 2004 payment to Hawaii, plus any interest that accrued on the withheld amount.

agreement, the State of Hawaii joined 33 other states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

In April 2020, Hawaii received its annual MSA payment of \$35,309,044.26, and payments are current, subject to some adjustments over time.

III. CIGARETTE TAX AND TOBACCO TAX LAW (Chapter 245, HRS)

A. Background

In 2000, the Legislature recognized the need for a mandatory cigarette tax stamp system "to assess, collect, and enforce the cigarette and tobacco tax." The Conference Committee on S.B. No. 2486, S.D. 2, H.D. 2, C.D. 1 (2000) (Act 249, Session Laws of Hawaii 2000), reported:

[E]nforcement of the current system of collecting cigarette and tobacco taxes is sporadic, haphazard, and ineffective, resulting in uncollected potential tax revenue. The current system of filing of returns by licensed dealers is in effect a system of voluntary compliance. Persons may try to sell cigarettes and tobacco products without obtaining a license, or could have a license and not file a return or understate the income on the return.

The Legislature recognized that obtaining proof of large-scale black market cigarette sales is nearly impossible because the activity is surreptitious and the State's resources are limited. Nonetheless, the Legislature concluded, "judging from the anecdotal evidence existing and continuing over a fifteen-year period that a black market exists." With these concerns in mind, the Cigarette Tax and Tobacco Tax Law, chapter 245, HRS, was amended by Act 249 to require that the tax on the sale or use of cigarettes under section 245-3, HRS, shall be paid by licensees through the use of stamps. Beginning on January 1, 2001, a licensee or its authorized agent or designee has been required to affix a stamp to the bottom of each individual package of cigarettes could be sold or offered for sale to the public unless affixed with the stamp as required by chapter 245. Beginning in 2000, the Unit has worked closely with licensed wholesalers and dealers and the Department of Taxation to facilitate the implementation of the cigarette stamp program. In January 2001, the Unit began conducting inspections for compliance with the program.

In 2005, the Attorney General proposed a bill to amend chapter 245 to require a permit for the retail sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products, and to require retailers to keep adequate records. These amendments became effective on December 1, 2006 (Act 131, Session Laws of Hawaii 2005). The Retail Tobacco Permit program addresses the problem of cigarettes and other tobacco products being imported to

Hawaii by entities other than known wholesalers and distributors; for example, consumers and retail stores often order cigarettes by Internet, telephone, or mail. The record-keeping requirements of the Retail Tobacco Permit program help law enforcement officers determine the sources of cigarettes and other tobacco products sold at retail, and thus these record-keeping requirements help prevent evasion of state taxes.

B. Cigarette Tax Revenues

Since the implementation of the tax stamp program on January 1, 2001, cigarette tax revenues have increased significantly. Cigarette tax revenues increased from \$40,049,539 in FY 1999-2000 to \$51,739,469 in FY 2000-2001 (an increase of \$11,689,930 or approximately 29 percent) even though the tax stamp program was in effect for only half of FY 2000-2001 and effective enforcement began at the retail level only three months before the end of FY 2000-2001. In FY 2019-2020, the Department of Taxation reported cigarette tax collections of \$102,444,638.86.

Cigarette Tax Revenues by Fiscal Year

FY 1999-2000	40,049,539
FY 2000-2001	51,739,469
FY 2001-2002	62,609,477
FY 2002-2003	, ,
	70,586,392
FY 2003-2004	77,541,843
FY 2004-2005	83,135,360
FY 2005-2006	85,702,483
FY 2006-2007	88,771,666
FY 2007-2008	101,560,051
FY 2008-2009	104,433,576
FY 2009-2010	119,926,741
FY 2010-2011	135,647,918
FY 2011-2012	130,994,721
FY 2012-2013	120,095,909
FY 2013-2014	114,112,465
FY 2014-2015	121,629,882
FY 2015-2016	116,382,902
FY 2016-2017	114,926,266
FY 2017-2018	110,762,991
FY 2018-2019	102,793,762
	, ,
FY 2019-2020	102,444,639

C. Enforcement

The Unit conducts inspections, including unannounced inspections, of wholesalers and distributors, retail establishments, and cigarette vending machines for compliance with the Cigarette Tax and Tobacco Tax Law. As of July, 2020, the Department of Taxation reported that 1,261 retailers held Retail Tobacco Permits: 786 in Honolulu County, 191 in Hawaii County, 203 in Maui County, and 77 in Kauai County. Inspections have been conducted in all of the counties, although COVID-19-related travel restrictions prevented inspections on Lanai and Molokai.

- In FY 2019-2020, 1,501 compliance inspections were conducted statewide: 1,184 on Oahu, 136 on the island of Hawaii, 58 on Kauai, 123 on Maui. COVID-19-related travel restrictions impacted other inspections, so there were no inspections on Molokai or Lanai.
- Since April 1, 2001, enforcement activities have resulted in more than 160 felony arrests, numerous investigations, and seizure of more than 3,204,448 illegal cigarettes and 267.8 pounds of tobacco leaves. Historically, arrests have been made on Hawaii, Kauai, Maui, Molokai, and Oahu.
- In FY 2019-2020, 15 criminal tobacco investigations were conducted. 105 cartons of cigarettes (the equivalent of 21,000 cigarettes) and 44.7 pounds of tobacco leaves were seized at the Honolulu International Airport (three investigations) and at the U.S. Post Office (twelve investigations), as a result of cooperative efforts between the Department, the United States Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Postal Service. It is estimated that the COVID-19-related restrictions on travel, specifically international flights, also resulted in a reduction of the number of airport investigations and seizures.
- Since April 1, 2001, the Unit has prosecuted 139 tobacco cases, resulting in criminal fines of \$197,600.
- In total, 75 cigarette prosecutions have resulted in court-ordered forfeiture of cigarettes. In addition, the Department has secured 99 civil administration forfeiture orders for, or stipulations or agreements to, the forfeiture of confiscated cigarettes.

D. Gray Market

Gray market cigarettes are American-made or foreign-made cigarettes – usually major American brands – sold by the manufacturers specifically for sale outside of the United States that nevertheless ends up in the United States. Gray market cigarettes cut into the market share of the PMs. Gray market cigarettes include cigarettes that have been imported illegally into the United States in violation of federal law, fail to meet federally mandated labeling requirements, or bear an unauthorized brand or trademark,

and are considered contraband. Foreign-made gray market cigarettes are manufactured overseas in such places as China, Colombia, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and Switzerland, representing a multitude of brands and cigarette manufacturers. These cigarettes are often smuggled into Hawaii from Asia (predominantly the Philippines and Southeast Asia) and the South Pacific and have been found in small grocery and liquor stores. Some mainland distributors attempt to mask or re-label "Tax Exempt" cigarettes to avoid prosecution for the sale of gray market cigarettes.

Historically, to address the gray market and other contraband cigarette problems, the Department has established relationships and has shared information with the taxing and regulatory authorities of Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Canada. The Department has also historically coordinated with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; the Internal Revenue Service; United States Customs and Border Protection; the United States Postal Service; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with regard to gray market cigarettes and other contraband cigarette-related issues. The Department has worked with United States Customs and Border Protection in joint investigations of persons smuggling contraband cigarettes to Hawaii from foreign countries.

E. Counterfeit Tax Stamps

Counterfeit tax stamps cost as little as \$0.03 to \$0.50 per stamp and, therefore, create a significant price advantage over vendors who sell legally stamped cigarettes. The Department searches for counterfeit Hawaii tax stamps in order to prevent their circulation.

F. Half-Stamping

Historically vendors have attempted to evade the cigarette tax by placing a halfstamp on the bottom of a package of cigarettes, thus stamping two packs for the price of one. Investigations have resulted in arrests for selling half-stamped or partially stamped packs. In November 2001, the Unit made arrests for half-stamping and seized 12,879 packs, of which 2,639 packs were half-stamped and 10,240 packs were unstamped. The Unit continues to ensure that the application of tax stamps conforms with the stamping requirements set forth by rules adopted by the Department of Taxation.²

G. Sales by Internet and Mail

Efforts continue in Hawaii and across the nation to address the problem of Internet sales of cigarettes. Significant federal regulation in the form of the Prevent All

² Title 18, Hawaii Administrative Rules, section 18-245-3 provides that stamps or stamping indicia shall be securely affixed to the bottom of each cigarette package in such a manner that the stamps or stamping indicia are clearly visible, legible, and complete.

Cigarette Trafficking Act of 2009 (PACT ACT³) was passed in March 2010. In FY 2019-2020, the Tobacco Unit also initiated 11 investigations into nine Craigslist and two OfferUp Internet offerings for the sale of tobacco products without a tobacco retail permit within the State. The investigations resulted in the listings being removed from Craigslist and OfferUp within a day or two of the investigations being initiated.

As noted above, interdiction activities also took place in conjunction with United States Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Postal Service where parcels of cigarettes and loose tobacco were seized as prohibited mailed items and treated as contraband in violation of the PACT ACT.

IV. FY 2019-2020 RECEIPTS INTO TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT SPECIAL FUND

Master Settlement Agreement funds		350,000
Cigarette tax stamp fees/interest/fines/misc.		<u>1,510,920</u>
	Total:	\$1,860,920

V. FY 2019-2020 APPROPRIATIONS AND EXPENDITURES

In FY 2019-2020, there was a total appropriation of \$1,629,747 for the Master Settlement Agreement and cigarette tax stamp enforcement. The appropriation was funded in part by \$350,000 from moneys received from the MSA and \$1,510,920 from cigarette tax stamp fees.

Expenses for FY 2019-2020 totaled \$1,423,285.22 which leaves an appropriation balance of \$206,461.78.

APPROPRIATION			1,629,747.00
PERSONNEL COSTS		1,108,046.20	
Salaries and Fringe			
OPERATIONAL EXPENSES &			
OVERHEAD COSTS			
Supplies	4,887.40		
Membership Dues and Subscriptions	1,727.85		
Telephone	4,184.82		
Printing and Binding	83.77		

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³ 18 U.S.C. § 1716E (2010).

Mileage	2,641.68		
Travel Costs	10,568.17		
Lease Rent	79,947.54		
Rental of Equipment	1,555.01		
Repairs and Maintenance	1,987.19		
Miscellaneous Expenses	1,651.12		
Registration Fees	80.00		
Non-Asset Computer Hardware, printers	509.91		
Special Fund Assessments paid to B&F	136,181.03		
Special Fund Assessments for AG Department (Redistribute Expenses)	69,233.53		
TOTAL		315,239.02	
TOTAL COSTS			1,423,285.22
APPROPRIATION BALANCE			206,461.78