

Union County creates in-house audit bureau

Posted by [ksantiag](#) May 18, 2009 17:34PM

UNION COUNTY -- The county has created an in-house audit bureau which will conduct internal investigations and monitor internal controls for the county government's 2,000-person workforce.

The new Economic Crime/Inspection Bureau will operate out of the Union County Sheriff's Office and will also investigate and refer economic matters such as credit card fraud, Ponzi schemes and identity theft to the prosecutor's office, the county said today.

Richard Childs, the county's acting public safety director since January 2008, will head the office starting next week.

Union County Police Chief Daniel Vaniska will assume the title of acting public safety director, working double duty until a replacement public safety director is hired, said Sebastian D'Elia, county spokesman. He said it was too early to say when a replacement would be found.

Childs, 62, is a former state Division of Criminal Justice detective and Newark police officer. The Westfield resident served several years as a part-time civil litigation investigator in the county counsel's office, and has also assisted on accounting matters. He has served as a certified public accountant, certified fraud examiner and state licensed private detective for the past 23 years.

Childs said the new slot fits his "area of specialization, and it is becoming increasingly important to be attentive to the protection and safeguarding of our assets. This bureau will also provide the county with the added benefit of investigating internal matters as well," he added.

But some don't believe the new office will have the teeth to do its job properly, partly because it's under the purview of the county itself.

Tina Renna, a vociferous critic of the county government and current leadership, dismissed the new office as "silly."

Renna, whose Web site, [The County Watchers](#), bills itself as citizen watchdogs of Union County government, said the office will "be used for two things: as a weapon against internal enemies, and as a public relations tool. It's like putting the fox in charge of the hen house. How objective can they be?"

Sheriff Ralph Froehlich, who said the new office was created in consultation with county manager George Devanney, believes it will have the proper independence.

"Finances are always a very, very sensitive issue," the sheriff said today. "We got to keep track of where your monies are, especially in government. Someone who might be in a position of authority might do something improper." Froehlich, who has been county sheriff for 32 years, added, "We're not responding to anything special. County government is a big operation. There has to be a policeman to look into these issues. This is a prevention issue."

The new office will not increase the county's budget -- which was \$442.5 million this year -- D'Elia said, because Childs will use existing resources and manpower. Childs will retain his current salary, which is \$113,470.

There was also an existing vacant staff position within the county that had been accounted for in the budget. That position will be transferred to the Sheriff's Office to pay for Childs' salary, D'Elia said.

Childs' job description includes conducting internal investigations, developing and monitoring internal audit programs, training personnel on internal auditing, conducting due diligence on prospective vendors and periodically reviewing financial profiles of existing vendors, assisting county counsel in calculating economic damages in civil matters, and helping the county police internal affairs investigations.

D'Elia called the new office part internal audit, part public outreach. It was unclear why the position was created now, but D'Elia said it will help protect against acts of malfeasance like the ones committed by a former county data entry clerk, who forged dozens of welfare checks over a four-year period, pocketing \$144,000 worth of public assistance. The former employee, Dorothy Morasse, was sentenced to six years in prison in prison in September 2006 for those thefts.

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Comments

yagaa says...

Isn't this special...once again the fox will be monitoring the henhouse....Union county is a junior study in Chicago politics or mini-taminy hall, sure they'll pay a staff to box the numbers, ok, that's the first thing that will go unincuded in the auditing....you can fool some of the people some of the time.....this is straight up BS.....lol

Posted on 05/18/09 at 6:31PM

wdbge says...

Didn't Sheriff Ralph Froehlich rig an auction at a car dealer who had repossessed cars so that his son got multiple cars for next to nothing? Froehlich "announced" the auction by putting a tiny paper note outside his office door which nobody saw.

The car dealer had to go to court and get a judge to block the scam

This guy is going to help with internal auditing? They cannot be serious.

And yet they will all be re-elected.

Posted on 05/18/09 at 7:02PM

2thfairy says...

is this supposed to be a joke? can someone explain the humor. guess i'm a bit slow

Posted on 05/18/09 at 7:10PM

chipnjaz says...

The County is another layer of gov't that duplicates services provided by municipalities and the State.

We need an independent auditor to identify such waste, with an express objective to REDUCE THE SIZE of our bloated county bureaucracy.

Posted on 05/18/09 at 9:08PM

mistrkennedy says...

where do they begin??

Posted on 05/18/09 at 11:29PM

FlipityFlop says...

Isn't it too bad the walls of injustice couldn't just tumble down on top of each of all them?...

Posted on 05/19/09 at 2:47AM

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