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## WAYNE COUNTY UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR COUNTY OFFICIAL SEVERANCE PACKAGES

Wayne County, Illinois was put under a federal investigation after the severance of Turkia Mullin. What has become a major problem for the county now includes information released about more county officials were scheduled to leave their jobs with payouts, which totaled much more than what Mullin was slated to receive from the county, according to 7 Action News WXYZ. The severance for Mullin was supposed to be worth \$200,000, and the county commissioners wanted to find out if there were any other deals in the works like the one for Mullin. "Are there any other employees, appointees who have a severance package arrangement," asked commission vice-chair Alisha Bell. Commissioners were reassured by assistant Wayne County CEO Alan Helmkamp that there were no other deals in the works. "I'm not aware of, and I do not believe, that there are any other separations, severances, end of employment compensation, however you want to characterize it," he said. The fact of the matter is that those statements were not true as the county had plans to make even more payouts. According to 7 Action News, 15 more Wayne County employees were scheduled to receive payments that could reach \$80,000 if they simply left the county. Helmkamp said that he did not tell the commissioners because he did not find out about them until after the 4 of October. All appointees received the payment offers as part of a buyout program that the county was installing to save money. The program was supposed to encourage employees to leave in the spring with salary for six months. Close to 40 employees of the county took the deal. There was a select group of appointees that had their deal changed because the county said they were too important to lose. Their new deal said they could take the severance money when they left the county for good. Deborah Gordon, an employment attorney, reviewed the deal and said that it was unheard of in government. "They create a policy that gives people the incentive to leave all within the same block of time, and then they go, 'Oh my God! What are we going to do if all these people leave at the same time? We'll just not follow our policy and we'll just say, you know what, whenever you want to leave, you go ahead. Here's your money," Gordon said. Matt Schenk, the chief of staff, was scheduled to receive \$50,000 in severance while county CEO Cameron Priebe was also schedule to receive \$50,000 in severance. The county chief financial officer, Carla Sledge, was in line to receive a severance of \$80,000. Deputy CEO Azzam Elder was in line to receive \$75,000. The entire severance package for the 15 select appointees was going to total \$850,000.

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