

EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENT MAY BE ILLEGAL



A legislative auditor's office may have found some shocking news related to a district attorney violating the law. There have been at least three findings. Those findings include; Assistant District Attorney Patrick Johnson seems to be an employee of the district attorney and the local police jury. There is some confusion about this and it needs to be cleared. The fault here is that Bossier Parish must use the district attorney for legal purposes and cannot hire someone else to do the work. Secondly, there are some issues between contradictory state laws and payment of legal services between DA Schuyler Marvin and Bossier. Last but not least, it is not known if Jackson's law firm can continue to provide legal advice while being associated with so many Bossier Parish public offices. However, despite all of this there are no plans for situating Jackson's issues. Instead, the only thing changing at this moment is the retirement systems in which Jackson was enrolled in. He is simply being moved from one retirement system to another. With that being said, Patrick Jackson is still getting his paychecks from both sources. To break down this mess for the public eye, Jackson is working as an assistant district attorney. However, he is also on the payroll of the Bossier Police Jury. The issue behind him having both job positions is that it could be seen as holding dual offices. "Unless exempted by law, Bossier and Webster must use the district attorney and cannot secure their own counsel for general legal matters. The parishes can opt to secure 'special counsel' under R.S. 42:263; however, we understand that neither parish has sought to use this option for its legal services. Our assessment revealed that the district attorney is required to act as the regular attorney and legal counsel, without extra compensation, for both Bossier and Webster parishes. Neither parish meets the criteria to hire/pay its own attorney in lieu of the district attorney." This information was given by the legislative auditor's report. Therefore, there is no existing law that prohibits Jackson from holding dual public office roles. However, there is still some debate as to Jackson assigning work to an associate of his law firm. The report also stated that "We maintain that only the district attorney can act as Webster's regular legal counsel and assign his assistants to provide counsel." Although this is confusing to the people of Bossier Parish, it is wise to have all of these documents so that things are clear in the future. Sometimes issues like this are only resolved when they become a part of the public eye. Although there are still some legal kinks to be worked out, it is still imperative that Jackson follow the advice given in the auditor's report.

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