



BRADLEY COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE

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Sheriff Eric Watson



MEDIA RELEASE

Date: December 20, 2017

CLEVELAND, TN- The Bradley County Sheriff's Office has been informed that the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has ruled allegations presented to their office as "baseless and incorrect".

Sheriff Eric Watson has released the below statement in regards to those findings.

SHERIFF ERIC WATSON'S STATEMENT

"I am so pleased that the Comptroller of the State of Tennessee spent, in his words, "over 200 hours investigating the allegations which had been submitted to the State Auditors." This was in addition to the normal audit procedures which are followed in evaluating the financial records of the departments of County Government. I did not believe that the allegations which were submitted would be found to have any merit.

The 2016-2017 state audit represents the fourth consecutive audit of this department with NO FINDINGS.

I continue to have great confidence in the operation of the Bradley County Sheriff's Office. Since I have held the Office of Sheriff, Commissioner Dan Rawls has consistently proven to be an antagonist of both myself and this department. Rawls' conduct has required many hours and tax dollars to be spent in responding to requests for information. It is now time for us to reemphasize the necessity of cooperative efforts among our governmental entities and government officials.

When I took office, there was a lawsuit pending against Commissioner Rawls which had been filed by an individual who was employed with the Bradley County Sheriff's Office.

The outcome of that lawsuit was not influenced, nor impeded by our response of a request from Commissioner Rawls to terminate this employee. When the Chancellor heard all of the evidence, her findings were inconsistent with the position which was taken by Commissioner Rawls and his testimony was not deemed credible enough to sustain his position and our deputy was able to make a civil recovery.

I respectfully request that Commissioner Rawls cease in attempting to defame the operations of the Bradley County Sheriff's Office or its Sheriff.

I would like to thank the Bradley County Commission for allowing the audit to be conducted by the Comptroller, rather than wasting potentially tens of thousands of dollars on an audit and allowing these false allegations to continue to exist.

However, the resulting extra time and work required of the state auditors did in fact cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars, which include those who reside in Bradley County.

The Bradley County Sheriff's Office will continue to strive for the greatest security for our community and its visitors while also practicing the conservative budgetary practices I promised to use when I was elected to this office.

As always, the credit for the work of the Bradley County Sheriff's Office truly goes to our officers and staff in which I continue to take great pride in having them as part of my administration. Tough decisions have to be made by our law enforcement officers on an hourly basis.

Once again, I solicit the prayers, support, assistance and tips of the good citizens of Bradley County to help us as we strive to be an ever better Sheriff's Office."

Submitted by,

Director James E. Bradford, Jr.

Communications Division