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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR**

***COUNTY BENEFIT PROGRAM AUDITED***

According to DuPage County Auditor Jim Rasins, \$2.9 million in payments made under a program designed to provide retiring County employees with additional benefits were generally made in accordance with the program requirements. However, Rasins recommended that controls and procedures could be changed to provide better administration of the program.

The Auditor made the disclosure after an internal audit of the County's employee retention incentive program. The audit covered the amounts paid to 119 individuals who left the County payroll in 2001 and 2002.

The purpose of the audit was to evaluate whether the amounts paid during 2001 and 2002 were disbursed only to eligible individuals, and were properly calculated. Rasins concluded that all of the former employees that received payments were eligible for them.

Rasins also noted that weaknesses in administrative procedures resulted in four individuals receiving erroneous program benefit amounts. Two former employees were overpaid almost \$20,000, and two other individuals were underpaid a total of \$9,500.

One of the overpayments, in the amount of \$6,174, has been repaid to the County, while the second has been referred to the State's Attorney.

Rasins noted that the program became effective in January 1999, after adoption by the County Board. The goal of the program was to provide additional income to long-term employees who left their County jobs.

It provided for payments to full-time and part-time employees when there was a voluntary separation or layoff, based upon their length of service and pay rate. Individuals were required to work for the County for a minimum of 10 years to receive benefits under the program. The benefit amount increased the longer that an employee worked for the County.

Auditor Rasins provided recommendations that tightened controls to ensure that future payments are accurately calculated, documented, and reviewed, and were processed in a consistent manner.

Rasins noted that the County is currently offering a cash incentive to employees who voluntarily terminate their employment with the County.

“This incentive will lead to increased payments under the audited program. Therefore, it is important that appropriate procedures exist to accurately determine the amount of the program benefits paid,” he said.