



Switzerland County Circuit Court

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9.23.2026

To the Residents of Switzerland County:

Over the past year, I have been conducting a comprehensive review of the vendors, services, and processes used by the Switzerland County Circuit Court Clerk's Office. The purpose of this review has been straightforward: to make sure the companies we do business with and the processes we have in place are serving the best interests of our office, our customers, and the taxpayers of Switzerland County.

When I took office in 2024, I did not immediately begin changing vendors or longstanding office procedures. I believed it was important to first understand the office as a whole—how each process worked, what was working well, where problems existed, and where improvements could responsibly be made. Good management is not about making changes simply for the sake of change. It is about taking the time to understand an operation, identifying areas that need improvement, and then, taking action.

As part of that review, I examined the process being used to collect unpaid balances on criminal cases and traffic citations. That review revealed a significant amount of money that remained legally owed but had not been collected. Some of these unpaid balances had been outstanding for many years, while others were more recent. Once those balances were identified and verified, I did not believe ignoring them was an acceptable option.

I understand that some community members are unhappy that unpaid balances on criminal cases and traffic citations have now been placed into collections. Some of these unpaid balances have been outstanding for many years, while others are more recent. But there is another side to that issue that is just as important: the taxpayers of Switzerland County have a right to expect that money legally ordered by the courts will actually be collected.

These are not new fines or fees. They are existing court-ordered obligations that have not been fully paid. The Clerk's Office does not have the authority to simply forgive a valid balance because it has gone unpaid.

There is also a fundamental issue of fairness. Many people have paid their fines, court costs, and traffic citations as required. Those individuals did what was required of them. It would not be fair to them—or to the taxpayers of Switzerland County—to ignore valid balances owed by others.

The public should also understand that when the Clerk's Office collects these balances, the money does not simply become revenue for the Clerk's Office or even entirely for Switzerland County. Indiana law determines how these dollars are distributed. Portions are remitted to the State of Indiana, retained by the county, distributed to the town, or directed to specific funds and programs. The Clerk's Office is responsible for collecting, accounting for, and distributing those dollars according to law.

If someone believes a balance is incorrect, we will review the court record and make sure our records are accurate. But when the record establishes that the money is owed, we have a responsibility to pursue collection.

Accountability has to work both ways. We expect government officials to account for public money, and government has an obligation to make reasonable efforts to collect money that is legally due. Allowing valid court-ordered balances to remain uncollected is not responsible stewardship.

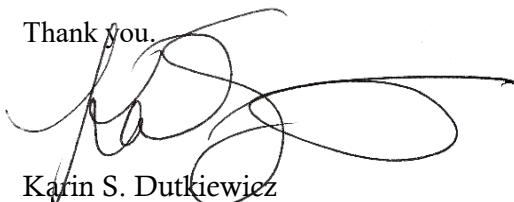
Community members have every right to ask why they are now being asked to pay a balance that may have gone uncollected for years. Taxpayers also have every right to ask why money legally owed was not collected in the first place.

I cannot speak to why collection efforts were not made in prior years, and I will not speculate about decisions that were made before I became Clerk. What I can tell you is what we are doing now. We identified the outstanding obligations, reviewed and verified the records, and put a process in place to collect legitimate unpaid balances—both current balances and those that have remained unpaid for years.

I cannot change what was done before I took office. I am responsible for what happens while I am Clerk. When we identify a problem, we are going to address it. When money is legally owed, we are going to make reasonable efforts to collect it. And when we collect public money, we are going to account for it and distribute it as required by law.

That is the standard I believe the taxpayers of Switzerland County should expect from this office.

Thank you.



Karin S. Dutkiewicz
Switzerland County Circuit Court Clerk