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**Are Bad Bonds
Costing County
Millions?**

***Clerk Of
Courts Asks
Prosecutor's
Office To
Investigate***

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CINCINNATI --

The Hamilton County clerk of courts said she's asked the prosecutor's office to investigate whether anyone in her department is accepting bonds that can't be repaid.

The investigation stems from complaints brought forward by Debra Henneke, a former bondswoman who claims some court clerks are knowingly accepting bonds that have no collateral behind them, essentially allowing the release of inmates

who should remain behind bars.

"If you want to do business here, you know how it works," said Henneke, who used to own A-1 Bail Bonds.

Henneke said her license was revoked for soliciting business on court grounds and for accepting counterfeit bonds, illegal practices she called commonplace.

And Henneke said some clerks are in on it.

Henneke said she hired private investigator Bruce Keaton to prove it. Keaton recorded several conversations, which he shared with WLWT.

In one recording, a bondsman talks about "friends" he has in the clerk's office.

In another instance, a bondsman offered

to collect only 7 percent of a bond, even though the law states that 10 percent must be collected.

In a third recording, a bondsman accepted property instead of cash, but the property had no equity.

"He had someone at the clerk's office he could go to, and they'd give me (the) full amount," said Keaton about the bondsman in his undercover investigation.

WLWT's Laura Borchers took those concerns to Patricia Clancy, the clerk of courts for Hamilton County.

Clancy said she doesn't have any knowledge of her employees looking the other way on counterfeit bonds.

But she did tell WLWT that she is working with prosecutors to make certain her office is clean.

"We have turned over the idea that there is something that should be investigated," Clancy said.

With a looming budget deficit that could mean layoffs for the police and fire departments, Vice Mayor Roxanne Qualls wants to know where the money is. She said she's sent a letter to Clancy

city antagonized Marge Schott for doing business in the Boys Club

- [debremo \[Profile\]](#)

Member

Nov. 16, 2010 7:46am EST

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No Mr O'Brien there's no problem because you are getting your cut too, you and the brotherhood. They cut your throat too when they got caught up in a sting. Mr Wayne Knight told me about Trimble making his own powers, Thanks Wayne

- [debremo \[Profile\]](#)

Member

Nov. 16, 2010 7:38am EST

[debremo](#)

[Inappropriate](#)



Patty, Patty are you calling Todd Portune a liar or was I dreaming when he said Sunday that you, Kevin O'Brien and John Williams were aware that there was fake powers being used to get people out of jail and that's why you can't collect the money owed the county. Why are you secretly meeting with Lexington Nation's attorneys and Mr Mike Allen, Ronald Trimble's insurance company and Ronald Trimble's lawyer, to reach a settlement. You lie, you are out and you've been caught, face the facts

- [adampadams \[Profile\]](#)

Member

Nov. 16, 2010 12:08am EST

[adampadams](#)

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This really doesn't surprise me. Corrupt county employees with an inept management system leads to easy and long term fraud. I'm sure you can find similar stories across the board, in many offices here in Hamilton County along with the City of Cincinnati and most any county or jurisdictions across this country. If the public would wake up we can fix a lot of this with elections, yet apathy rules and the beat of fraud and corruption goes on, ba dum ba da bum.

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asking that very question.

"The fact that the Clerk of Courts office has not enforced the court order, has not collected the money, means our Police Department is sitting there without the money that is due it," Qualls said.

"We're trying to collect it. We're working in conjunction with the courts and the prosecutor's office to collect that outstanding debt," Clancy said.

But Clancy said there is also some hesitation in collecting bonds because money collected could be ordered returned when the offender shows up in court.

"The purpose of a bond is to ensure someone's appearance in court. It is not for any type of revenue stream when someone posts a bond," Clancy said.

Henneke said some bondsmen owe millions to the county and every little bit could help.

"They owe millions of dollars with no insurance to back them up," Henneke said. "One bondsman alone owes over \$2 million."

Another bondsman told WLWT that the practice of accepting illegal bonds has been going on for some time. That bondsman has lodged complaints with the state attorney general, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office and the prosecutor's office.

Henneke has contacted the Ohio Department of Insurance, which regulates bondsmen, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, handing over the results of her own investigation. Neither agency would confirm that they were pursuing an investigation.

[Laura Borchers](#) contributed to this report.

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