July 13, 2006

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

An investigation by the State Auditor’s Office’s Special Investigations Unit led to the Public Integrity Unit at the Travis County District Attorney’s Office obtaining a plea agreement on April 27, 2006, with Connie Williams Little. Ms. Little was the former executive director of Texas SkillsUSA, a Texas Association (formerly referred to as the Texas SkillsUSA-Vocational Industrial Clubs of America or VICA). In the agreement, Ms. Little was required to make full restitution to Texas SkillsUSA in the amount of $4,858 and to pay $2,000 in investigative costs. Ms. Little pleaded no contest to disorderly conduct and was given a $500 fine. The agreement was finalized on July 5, 2006, after Ms. Little made full restitution to the District Attorney’s Office.

Texas SkillsUSA is a student organization dedicated to developing social, leadership, and occupational education programs for young people interested in careers in trade, technical, and health fields.

In September 2002, the Texas Education Agency (Agency) contacted the Special Investigations Unit to initiate an investigation into allegations that the former executive director of Texas SkillsUSA misused the organization’s funds, which included federal funds administered by the Agency.

The investigation revealed that in January 2002, Ms. Little submitted false information to the Agency to receive Vocational Service Grant funds and submitted false information in a quarterly financial report. In July 2001, Ms. Little diverted funds from the sale of property belonging to Texas SkillsUSA for her personal use.

Vocational Service Grant Funds
The Texas Education Agency administers Vocational Service Grant funds. These grants are funded through the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technology Discretionary Program and are awarded subject to availability.

Examples of the entities that receive these funds include school districts, charters schools, education service centers, and local education agencies. To receive funds, organizations agree to oversight from the Texas Education Agency and are required to provide complete and accurate financial records and requests for expense reimbursements that are accompanied by original receipts.
If you have any questions, please contact Pamela Munn, Manager, Special Investigations Unit, at (512) 936-9795 or me at (512) 936-9500.

Sincerely,

John Keel, CPA
State Auditor

cc: The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas
    The Honorable Ronnie Earle, Travis County District Attorney
    Dr. Shirley J. Neeley, Commissioner, Texas Education Agency
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