

Statement of Facts

The State and the Defendant understand, agree, and stipulate to the following Statement of Facts, which the State would prove beyond a reasonable doubt had this case proceeded to trial:

Erica Griswold (“Griswold”) has served as the duly elected Register of Wills for Anne Arundel County, Maryland since December 2022. Griswold’s annual salary is approximately \$146,117.91.

The Office of the Register of Wills (“ROW” or “the Office”) for Anne Arundel County is a Maryland State agency, the purpose of which is to offer protection to decedents and their heirs, legatees, and creditors by ensuring that their wishes are carried out and they receive the monies and property to which they are entitled. The ROW is responsible for ensuring that the proper inheritance taxes and fees are collected on behalf of the State of Maryland. The Anne Arundel County ROW consists of Griswold, and the following employee positions: a Chief Deputy, approximately five supervisors, and approximately twenty-eight other employees.

When inheritance tax is due relating to a decedent’s estate within Anne Arundel County, the ROW sends an invoice to the beneficiaries of the estate. When mail involving inheritance taxes is received at the ROW, any associated paperwork is docketed on the estate docket and the check is then recorded on a check register. The employee handling the mail then forwards the check with a memo to the teller to process the check. Checks received at the ROW for the purpose of payment of inheritance tax are typically made payable to the “Office of the Register of Wills” or the name of whomever the elected register of wills for Anne Arundel County is at the time. Typically, the beneficiary sending the inheritance tax includes in the envelope a remittance copy, along with the check with a copy of the invoice.

On or about June 16, 2023, a cashier’s check in the amount of \$6,645.00 (the “check”) was received at the ROW in Annapolis, Maryland. The remitter of the check was the beneficiary of an open estate (Estate 1) within the Office, and the check was made payable to Erica Griswold for the purpose of satisfying an invoice received from the Office for payment of non-probate inheritance tax.

On the same day, the employee who was processing the mail containing the check at the ROW office took the check directly to Griswold and inquired whether she had any information relating to the check, because the envelope did not include a copy of the invoice it was intended to satisfy. Griswold falsely advised the mail processor that she had been expecting this check (implying that the check was intended for Griswold in her personal capacity), and based on Griswold’s false representation, the employee allowed Griswold to keep possession of the check. Griswold did not know the remitter of the check, and she knew the check was not intended for her personal use. Griswold was aware that computer system searches could be conducted to identify the name of a person who has an interest in an estate in order to identify the estate with which they are associated and/or the invoice in which a check was intended to satisfy. These searches were not conducted in this case because of Griswold’s false representation that she had been expecting this check for herself personally.

At approximately 12:43 p.m. on or about June 22, 2023, at the Chase Bank located on Forest Drive in Annapolis, Maryland, Griswold cashed the \$6,645.00 check, and kept the cash for her personal use.

On or about August 4, 2023, the remitter of the check contacted the Office inquiring why he was still receiving invoices for an inheritance tax due in the amount of \$6,645.00 when he had already paid the tax via the check mailed to the Office.

On August 4, 2023, Griswold was made aware that the remitter of the check had contacted the Office inquiring as to why he was continuing to receive invoices for the Estate 1 inheritance tax. A ROW employee immediately made Griswold aware that the remitter of the check had contacted the Office inquiring as to why he was continuing to receive invoices for the Estate 1 inheritance tax. That same day, and continuing for several months thereafter, numerous employees of the Office communicated to Griswold the importance of repaying the \$6,645.00. One employee even offered to help Griswold repay the money.

On November 14, 2023, Griswold's personal and work cell phones as well as her work laptop were seized by law enforcement pursuant to search and seizure warrants. A search of Griswold's personal cell phone revealed that close in time to cashing the check, she had conducted numerous internet searches for the name of the remitter of the check, evidencing that Griswold did not know this individual and was aware that the check received at the ROW office was not intended for her personally.

Griswold deposited the check on June 22, 2023, was first confronted by Office employees about the theft on August 4, 2023, became aware of the official criminal investigation into her conduct regarding the check on or about November 14, 2023, and was criminally indicted by an Anne Arundel County grand jury on January 26, 2024. On February 23, 2024, Griswold repaid the \$6,645.00 to the ROW.

If called to testify, employees of the ROW and bank employees would identify Erica Griswold as the individual who took the aforementioned inheritance tax check owed to the State of Maryland and cashed it at the Chase Bank on Forest Drive in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The remitter of the check would testify that the money was not intended for Erica Griswold personally but was intended to pay inheritance tax.