

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: State's Attorney Michelle Courier – 815-544-0868

BOONE COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY PURSUES LATE FINES & FEES

Boone County State's Attorney Michelle Courier wants fiscal responsibility for Boone County and is doing her share through the collection of unpaid fines and fees. Courier is pursuing the collection of fines and fees inhouse rather than continuing with a contract with a Florida based collection agency. In doing so, Courier, rather than the collection agency, is seeking a fee from those individuals with delinquent fines to defer the collection costs as well as 9% interest for the unpaid penalties. The Boone County State's Attorney's office has not previously added interest to outstanding fines and fees.

Currently, according to Circuit Clerk records, there is approximately \$3 million in unpaid fines and fees. Courier recognizes the difficulty in obtaining the total amount of fines and fees due, especially with those individuals with outstanding warrants or those serving time in the department of corrections. Courier commented, "Even if we get a small portion of that \$3 million, that's a significant amount for our budget. It's my obligation to the taxpayers to try to recover as much as possible."

Courier started the collection process last week by sending out a few hundred letters which informed those with delinquent fines to pay or an interest of 9 percent a year will be added. If the offenders do not pay, Courier is prepared to take them to court. Court action could result in an arrest warrant, wage garnishments, or other legal remedies, including those that would affect driving privileges. "We are going to start with letters, hoping that will get people to act and pay their debt," Courier said. "If they don't act and don't pay their debt, we'll take them to court."

The first payment was received within days of the letters being sent. The payment was from a Chicago offender in the amount of \$780 for a driving under the influence charge that dated back to 1996. Courier was pleased with the response. "For the price of a 42 cent stamp, we were able to get a 12 year old fine paid."

Courier looks forward to the challenge of collecting the fines and fees. "Collecting the fees is not just a matter of fiscal responsibility, but of making sure that justice is served. If an individual is ordered to pay a fine as a form of punishment and restitution and fails to pay that fine, justice is not served."