

# State Rep. Greg Lavelle Asks Attorney General to Toss Plea Deal

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For Immediate Release:

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A controversial plea agreement between state prosecutors and a man who admitted stealing tens-of-thousands of dollars from the Laurel School District has drawn the ire of one state lawmaker who is asking that the deal be withdrawn.

Former Laurel School District finance chief William S. Hitch Jr. had faced nearly 100 felony counts in connection with the theft of \$151,000 in taxpayer money over an eight year period.

Hitch reportedly entered into a deal with prosecutors in Superior Court on Monday in which he agreed to plead guilty to one count of theft; one count of tampering with public records; and one count of misusing a computer system. He'll also be required to pay back the stolen money and serve probation for a year.

In exchange, 96 other felony counts against Hitch were dropped. He will not serve any jail time, nor pay any fine.

"How is it possible that a person who blatantly and wantonly misused and betrayed the people's trust is able to reach a plea agreement with the Delaware Department of Justice that requires him to serve no prison time," wrote State Rep. Greg Lavelle (R-Sharples) in a letter sent today to the attorney general's office.

Rep. Lavelle said he was also mystified that a fine and the payment of interest on the money taken were not part of the plea agreement.

"The Justice Department should have required that Mr. Hitch repay taxpayers with interest and required an additional fine to compensate the state for the money spent to prosecute this case," Rep. Lavelle said. "Because of this oversight, taxpayers will have to reach even deeper into their pockets pursuing a lawsuit the Laurel School District has filed against Mr. Hitch."

Jason Miller, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said: "The sentence we obtained today requires that the defendant, now a convicted felon, literally pay for his crimes."

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But Rep. Lavelle took issue with that comment. "We've required no fine, no interest on the restitution, and no jail time. At best, we've slightly inconvenienced Mr. Hitch."

Rep. Lavelle is calling for the attorney general's office to withdraw its deal and either move forward with prosecuting the case or enter into a new agreement that includes punitive measures and protects the interests of taxpayers by requiring interest payments as part of the repayment of the stolen money.

"The public's trust has been violated, not only by Mr. Hitch but also by our justice system as the result of this plea deal," Rep. Lavelle wrote. "When a crime has been committed, appropriate justice should and must be served. I find it very hard to believe that the vast majority of the public would consider that Mr. Hitch's punishment was appropriate."

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