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For Immediate Release

July 16, 2015

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Auditor Keller Identifies Misuse of Taxpayer Dollars in Cibola County

SANTA FE – In a letter sent yesterday to the Cibola County Commission, State Auditor Tim Keller expressed serious concerns regarding financial controls over the use of credit cards by county staff and elected officials. The Office of the State Auditor (OSA) directed an Independent Public Accountant (IPA) to conduct a financial review after the annual audit for fiscal year 2013 raised concerns about material weaknesses of financial controls. The review revealed that certain purchases with county credit cards may amount to criminal violations or were otherwise inconsistent with procurement policies and procedures.

The financial review highlights items such as an AR-15 rifle, sunglasses, satellite television services, auto repairs, meals or drinks, hotels, cameras, boots, and a MLB baseball ticket that were purchased by employees, management, and those charged with Cibola County governance. The purchases appear personal in nature and/or lack supporting documentation and justification. On June 26, 2015, the OSA referred possible criminal violations to the New Mexico State Police.

“The weaknesses in the financial controls in Cibola County put taxpayer money in jeopardy. Cibola County is responsible for implementing internal controls and must do so immediately to prevent the misuse of public funds,” stated Auditor Keller. “The public deserves to know that tax dollars are being safeguarded and not used for personal shopping sprees.”

Former Cibola County Manager Scott Vinson was recently indicted on counts related to embezzlement, ethical principles of public service, and an official act for personal financial interest.

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