

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a follow-up to its 2011 Assessment of New Orleans' System of City Courts and Performance Review of New Orleans Traffic Court. The review encompassed City and Court policies, finances, and practices for the 2012 calendar year.

Louisiana law allows for the existence of city courts and parish courts that exercise limited jurisdiction over civil disputes below a set dollar amount (typically \$20,000), lesser criminal offenses (misdemeanors and local ordinances), and traffic violations. The City of New Orleans is unique among the State's local governments in having separate city courts for civil and criminal cases and a court devoted exclusively to traffic violations. New Orleans has four city courts, with a combined total of 12 judges, to exercise jurisdiction over matters that are handled in a single city court in other Louisiana jurisdictions.

In 2011 OIG Evaluators found wide-ranging problems in both the system of city courts in New Orleans and with the performance of the New Orleans Traffic Court in particular. Based on these findings, evaluators made twenty-nine recommendations to both the City of New Orleans and to the New Orleans Traffic Court.

Recommendations to the City included making legislative changes at the municipal level and proposing legislation to the state to consolidate the municipal and traffic courts and to reduce the number of judges. Evaluators also recommended that the City enforce budgetary controls on the courts and to seek the recovery of funds that were owed to the City in 2010.

At the time of this follow-up, the City did not accept many of the recommendations in the original report and had not acted upon those recommendations it did accept. The City had not changed its level of oversight regarding Court accounting and procurement, and the wasted resources and non-transparent expenditures presented in the OIG's 2011 report related to recommendations that were not accepted still exist.

Recommendations to the New Orleans Traffic Court were related to various aspects of the Court's operation, including personnel management, information technology, and financial controls. Evaluators also made recommendations to the City Attorney's office at the court to develop standards for prosecutorial discretion and to record and monitor case dispositions to hold prosecutors accountable to the public.

Overall, the Traffic Court made progress in implementing the recommendations in the original report. The Court adopted policies and procedures, improved management of employees and contractors, and planned to add accounting functions to its case management system. The Court also adopted a purchasing policy, but did not consistently follow it in 2012.

Appendix B of this report includes a table that summarizes recommendations from the original 2011 report and follow-up findings from 2012.