

Lee County Taxpayers Can Save Over \$23 Million Through Strategic Privatization of Pension Bonus Heavy Departments

Ft Myers, FL— A newly released analysis by <https://TripleDippers.org/> reveals a potential **\$23.61 million in taxpayer savings** over 8 years if Lee County Government phases out its reliance on employees enrolled in the pension cash bonus system Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) and privatizes select services. This Phase 1 reform effort identifies eight departments — including Legal Services, Stadium Operations, and Incinerator Operations — where privatization could eliminate inflated payroll and high employer pension contributions linked to DROP participants.



TRIPLE DIPPERS DOGE STYLE REFORM STRATEGIES



DEPARTMENT	PENSION BONUS STAFF	VERIFIED COST BASIS	1Y SAVINGS (EST)	8Y SAVINGS (EST)	REFORM STRATEGY
VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU	2	\$312,000	\$145,000	\$1,160,000	PRIVATIZE EVENT/TOURISM SERVICES
HEARING EXAMINER DIVISION	1	\$284,000	\$145,000	\$1,160,000	CONTRACT RETIRED JUDGE
LEGAL SERVICES	2	\$350,000	\$185,000	\$1,480,000	PRIVATIZE VIA CONTRACTED LEGAL COUNSEL
GIS & MAPPING SERVICES	2	\$330,000	\$180,000	\$1,440,000	LICENSE GIS & PRIVATE MAPPING VENDORS
INCINERATOR OPERATIONS	2	\$330,000	\$180,000	\$1,440,000	PRIVATIZE INCINERATOR
SPORTS STADIUMS	3	\$480,000	\$280,000	\$2,240,000	PRIVATIZE STADIUM OPS & EVENT MGT.
WATER SERVICES	3	\$465,000	\$285,000	\$2,280,000	PRIVATIZE (CONTRACT OR FULL UTILITY MODEL)
FACILITIES MAINTENANCE	4	\$620,000	\$340,000	\$2,720,000	PRIVATIZE JANITORIAL & BUILDING SERVICES
TOTALS	19	\$3,171,000	\$1,740,000	\$13,920,000	

[https:// TripleDippers.org /fl-lee-county-2025-report/](https://TripleDippers.org/fl-lee-county-2025-report/)

“Lee County taxpayers are footing the bill for triple dipping government retirees, even when proven private sector alternatives exist,” said Dave Jaye, Researcher, [https:// TripleDippers.org /](https://TripleDippers.org/). Triple Dippers refers to Public Employees who file fake retirement paperwork and for 8 years collect a paycheck and a pension at the same time to do the same job and don’t pay the standard 3% of salary into the Florida Retirement System (FRS). Taxpayers are forced to pay 20.02% of Triple Dippers Salaries to the FRS while paying 14.04% of the salary for standard Employees. Studies by Reason Foundation and the Mackinac Center document that Privatization can deliver the same services at 15% to 40% lower cost, without compromising performance.”¹

1

<https://reason.org/policy-brief/local-government-privatization-101/>

<https://www.heritage.org/government-regulation/report/municipal-services-the-privatization-option>



"Taxpayers pay nearly double for the current Lee County Hearing Examiner, yet a contracted judge offers equal legal expertise, more flexibility, and zero long-term pension liability. Miami Dade and other Florida Counties contract out the Hearing Examiner position which would save taxpayers \$1.16 Million over 8 years. Lee County Examiner Donna Marie Collins was not satisfied with her \$252,966 salary, annual benefits of \$101,186 est. and \$474,762 5-year pension bonus. Donna Collins used her public position to take an 8-year \$867,745 pension cash bonus! The Hearing Examiner reviews and makes decisions on zoning applications, code violations, and conducts code enforcement hearings. \$4.62 million is the Total Estimated Taxpayer Cost Over 8-Year Pension Bonus Period For Lee County Examiner Donna Collins.

Donna Collins pension cash bonus of \$867,745 is the second highest Pension Bonus following Lee County Attorney Richard Wesch who was not satisfied with \$672,083 and used his public position to take a \$1.289 Million Pension cash bonus. Wesch is proposing a new Lee County sales tax increase to cover Lee County Government's \$5.4 Million Deficit which his pension bonus helped create.



<https://tripleDippers.org/attorney-richard-wesch-not-satisfied-with-672082-takes-1289095-pension-bonus/>

The analysis found that Year 1 savings alone from privatizing departments with 19 DROP participants totaled nearly \$2.9 million. A full 8-year projection incorporating employer pension bonus cost avoidance shows **\$23.61 million in savings** if reforms are adopted.

Alternatively, replacing Pension bonus staff with standard County Staff will save \$2.44 Million in the first year and \$19.52 million over eight years. Either way, taxpayers win.

[https:// TripleDippers.org/](https://TripleDippers.org/) urges County Commissioners to act swiftly and responsibly to implement Phase 1 reforms —accept the retirement of pension bonus staff and replace with regular County Employees or better yet privatize the positions reducing pension liabilities, improving service delivery, and restoring fiscal integrity to county operations.

Comparison: Government Examiner vs. Contracted Retired Judge

Feature	Donna M. Collins – Chief Hearing Examiner	Contracted Retired Judge (Private)
Annual Salary	\$284,232.52	~\$125,000–\$150,000
Taxpayer-Paid Retirement Contributions (22%)	~\$62,532 annually	\$0
Pension Bonus (DROP, 8 yrs @ 4%)	~\$90,954	\$0
Annual Pension Post-Retirement (est. 60% salary)	~\$170,539	\$0
Health & Other Annual Benefits (40%)	~\$113,693	Minimal or negotiated
Lifetime Pension Liability	Fully taxpayer-funded	None

Total Estimated Taxpayer Cost Over 8-Year Pension Bonus

Period for Donna Collins

- **Salary:** \$2,273,856
- **Retirement Contributions:** \$500,256
- **Health & Other Benefits:** \$909,544
- **DROP Pension Bonus:** \$867,745
- **Unpaid Employee Contributions (3%):** \$68,216

Grand Total: \$4.62 million

“These Lee County Bureaucrats are Greedy! Million-dollar pension bonuses create pressure for higher property taxes and hurt homeowners. How much, if any of their taxpayer paid bonus with these triple dippers promise, in writing to donate to charity?” asked Dave Jaye. “Their outrageous pension bonuses helped create the

\$5.4 Million Lee County budget Deficit. Statewide the Pension cash bonus system has created a \$39 Billion in unfunded pension liability. over \$1,725 deficit for every Florida resident.

Media Contact:

Dave Jaye, Researcher

www.TripleDippers.org

586-488-5177