

Former state official ordered imprisoned for embezzlement conviction

The Associated Press

Juneau — A former state Department of Education official was ordered Monday to serve 1½ years in prison followed by 3½ years of probation for embezzling over \$40,000 from the state.

Sitka Superior Court Judge Duane Craske, on temporary assignment in Juneau, handed the sentence to Greg Thies, who earlier this year pleaded no contest to two counts of embezzlement.

Craske also ordered Thies, a former education department transportation officer, to repay \$40,571 — the amount of money he was charged with embezzling.

Thies was indicted by a grand jury last year after an investigation revealed that while he was employed by the Department of Education in 1978 and 1979, Thies used state money to pay personal bills and make payments on some real estate holdings.

Although Thies pleaded no contest, he maintains his innocence and said he plans to appeal. His attorney has said the

appeal will challenge the legality of a search of bank records which form the basis of the case against him. Craske ruled earlier that the state acted legally to obtain the records.

In court Monday, Thies told the judge: "I continue to maintain my innocence in this matter. I'm confident I will prevail at that (appellate) level."

Craske ordered Thies' sentence stayed, pending appeal. That means Thies will remain free until a final decision in his case.

The maximum sentence Thies could have received is 15 years in jail for each count and a fine equal to twice the amount embezzled.

District Attorney Pat Gullufsen urged a sentence of five years in prison followed by five years probation. But defense attorney William Council said Thies, who has no prior record, should not be sent to prison.

Gullufsen said the state's investigation revealed that Thies embezzled \$40,571 over a period of slightly more than a year.

Gullufsen told the judge the prosecution would have proved at trial that state funds which were payments for school district bus contracts were deposited in a bank in Juneau in a

special account.

Gullufsen said 33 checks were written on the account to pay Thies' personal bills, including electric bills, furniture payments, insurance pay-

ments on a mobile home and a boat, land payments, condominium payments and mortgage payments on a townhouse.