



Pharmacy regulator says retirement unrelated to audit



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Tony Leys, tleys@dmreg.com

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Iowa's longtime top pharmacy regulator is retiring at the end of this month, shortly after a state auditor's report questioned computer purchases made under his direction.

Lloyd Jessen, 61, said Wednesday morning that his retirement decision was unrelated to the audit. He has been executive director of the Iowa Board of Pharmacy since 1990, and came to the board from

the Iowa Supreme Court staff in 1987. "I've got my 30 years in and I decided it's time to retire," he said.

The state auditor's office [released a report Wednesday](#) that criticized pharmacy board purchases of computer equipment, including 24 iPads, worth a total of \$19,666, and 12 printers, worth a total of \$5,072.

The auditor's office said the purchases were not properly made or logged by state information technology experts. The report also said that some of the items were improperly delivered to Jessen's home instead of the board offices and that the board had inappropriately paid for home Internet service for Jessen and seven investigators until stopping that practice last year.

The report also criticized some practices by three other health profession boards, which regulate nurses, physicians and dentists. But most of the criticism focused on the pharmacy board.

Jessen said he and the investigators do much of their work from outside the office, including at night and on weekends. He said the health care boards operate somewhat independently from the rest of state government, partly because they rely on licensing fees instead of tax money. He acknowledged that technology purchases should have been made through the state procurement process and that shipments of equipment should have been made to the board office instead of to his home.

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"We were evolving from one way of doing it to another way, and there's a learning curve," he said. "We didn't mean to do it wrong, but we did."

The report said some of the equipment provided to pharmacy board staff, including iPads and laptop computers, had similar functions. The auditors questioned whether all of the equipment was necessary, and they said some of the items got little use. "Because employees had multiple devices and certain items purchased were not being used, the reasonableness and necessity of the purchases was not apparent," the auditor's office wrote.

Jessen said the equipment served specific professional purposes, including helping board members and staff keep track of and review thousands of documents. He said just one item, a \$199 Kindle document reader, wound up not being useful.

Jessen said the audit inquiry has been going on since 2012, and was unrelated to his retirement.

He said some of the purchases in question came after his agency ran up a budget surplus topping \$2 million a few years ago. His agency is required to have a budget that balances spending with the revenue it takes in from pharmacy-licensing fees.

He said Mariannette Miller-Meeks, then the health department director, told him the surplus was unacceptable, and that he should balance the budget by lowering fees, increasing investigation activities and finding other appropriate ways to spend the money. He said the board did lower fees, and it made legitimate spending choices, such as buying new computer equipment.



