

Fleener, Matt, Judge: Missouri public guardian's felony financial crime case can move forward, KMBC 9 (Jan. 14, 2026) <https://www.kmbc.com/article/judge-missouri-public-guardian-felony-case-move-forward/69999922>

Judge: Missouri public guardian's felony financial crime case can move forward

A Missouri elected public guardian's felony financial crime case will move forward after a preliminary hearing at the Sullivan County courthouse on Wednesday.

Joan Brummitt is accused of stealing nearly \$6,000 from a ward of the state under her care, according to court documents.

Brummitt, in her role as Sullivan County Public Administrator, has the responsibility to care for wards of the state.

Public administrators are elected in Missouri to take care of financial and medical decisions for elderly or mentally ill patients when a judge decides family or friends can no longer care for them.

Brummitt appeared in court with her attorney, Mark Williams.

Williams cross-examined Missouri State Highway Patrol investigator Barbara Littrell about Brummitt's admission to the highway patrol that she moved money from the ward's account to hers.

Littrell told the court that Brummitt admitted to highway patrol investigators that hackers told her to move the money.

"Bottom line is she conducted the transfers," Littrell said on the witness stand before Ninth Circuit Court Presiding Judge Terry Tschannen.

Littrell told the court that she worked with employees at Putnam County State Bank to uncover the alleged crimes.

KMBC asked Brummitt's attorney if she was coerced or told to transfer the ward's money into her personal account.

"Either that or if they were hacking into her phone," said Mark Williams. "Regardless of what she thought, you know, they could do it anyway, because as I cross-examined the officer, there

are ways depending on the bank and the security system the bank has that they can access people's accounts and they can go back and forth on your own account if you have more than one account.”

Judge Tschannen found enough probable cause existed to keep the case moving forward to trial. He referred the case to allow the Missouri Supreme Court to choose another judge.

DETAILS OF THE ALLEGED CRIME IN COURT DOCUMENTS

Court documents allege Brummitt moved money in October from an elderly ward’s bank account to her personal bank account on four separate occasions.

A Missouri State Highway Patrol investigator said on Oct. 14, 2025, Brummitt used her personal cell phone and online banking app to send money from the ward’s account through three separate transactions, totaling \$999, \$1,900 and \$1,980.

She made another online \$999 transfer on Oct. 16, the MSHP investigator said in court documents.

The total amount came to \$5,878.

Brummitt is charged with four felony counts of financial exploitation of an older/disabled person and four felony counts of stealing \$750 or more.

Brummitt still holds office. But a judge has restricted her from making financial decisions on behalf of her wards.

In a series called "Paper Prisons," KMBC 9 News is investigating ways to systemically improve the care of those under guardianship by highlighting stories of people struggling to navigate a tangled system of legal paperwork, medical records and court orders.