

**SCI Public Hearing
Organized Crime Spotlight: The Pagans
October 23, 2019
Opening Remarks
Executive Director Lee C. Seglem**

Good morning.

I'm Lee Seglem, Executive Director of the State Commission of Investigation.

One of the SCI's main responsibilities is to investigate the criminal underworld in all of its disturbing dimensions. Our mandate as an independent watchdog agency is unique and much broader than that, of course – we also expose waste and abuse of tax dollars. But it is in the criminal realm that the SCI historically has distinguished itself as a special instrument of government and as a valuable partner to law enforcement.

Late last year, in an effort to help the law enforcement community, policymakers and the public at-large to better understand the complex dynamics and challenges presented by the ever-changing landscape of criminal activity, we launched a new investigative project. We call it Organized Crime Spotlight. The goal is to provide authoritative profiles and threat assessments involving every significant criminal enterprise – that is, organized crime broadly defined – impacting New Jersey and the region.

Today, we are putting that spotlight on an Outlaw Motorcycle Gang known as the Pagans.

In sworn testimony from our investigators and others in law enforcement, as well as from members of the Pagans themselves, you will hear how this so-called club is undergoing a major resurgence, and how that is not good news for anyone concerned with public peace and public safety.

It is not a pretty picture:

Increased violence, including documented incidents of assaults, shootings and weapons possession all across the State.

Extortion of legitimate businesses.

Muscle-for-hire debt collection schemes.

Ties to traditional organized crime.

And, narcotics dealing – primarily methamphetamine – with Pagans members running meth distribution networks sometimes in concert with elements of the Mexican drug cartel.

You will also hear that despite the sometimes rough appearance of these guys, they are not at all unsophisticated when it comes to undermining and frustrating law enforcement. Hence, the heightened security you see around you here today. On another level, members of this organization also conduct counter-surveillances at various events, and they use electronic communications devices encrypted to shield their activities from outside scrutiny.

The SCI will have more to say about the Pagans and about others groups in the months to come.

Meanwhile, we trust that this hearing will be as eye-opening and enlightening for you as the entire investigation has been for us.

I'd now like to introduce SCI Counsel Marian Galietta who will call the first panel of witnesses.