

***New Jersey
State Commission of Investigation***



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SCI FOLLOW-UP REPORT

**PERSISTENT WASTE, ABUSE
AT NJSPCA**

TRENTON – One of New Jersey’s leading humane organizations remains incapable of adequately fulfilling its core mission – enforcing the State’s animal cruelty laws – amid persistent operational waste and abuse and a host of other internal problems, the State Commission of Investigation revealed in a report issued today.

The follow-up inquiry into the New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and its county-based affiliates showed that many of the problems and deficiencies first identified by the SCI nearly two decades ago have festered over the

years and, in some instance, have gotten worse absent proper and appropriate reform action recommended by the Commission in the first instance.

The SCI's latest findings reveal that the NJSPCA fails to consistently respond to animal cruelty complaints in a timely manner, spends exorbitant sums on legal billings rather than for direct animal care and remains a haven for "wannabe" cops – some of whom believe they are free to exercise police powers beyond enforcement of the animal cruelty statutes.

"The NJSPCA – as constituted and governed, then and now – is and has been a dysfunctional organization," the SCI found. "It has engaged in and tolerated waste and abuse, conflicts of interest and self-aggrandizement, and has routinely taken a cavalier approach to financial and operational accountability – all at the expense of unwitting donors and volunteers whose only motivation is to help abused animals."

The Commission concluded that most of these problems likely would have been addressed and ameliorated had the primary recommendations of its report in 2000 – to eliminate the SPCAs as enforcers of the animal cruelty laws and to assign the function to government – been implemented.

Since publication of the initial report, the Commission periodically received complaints about ongoing abuses involving various elements of SPCA organization. Prompted by allegations of mismanagement and abuse of power, the Commission launched a follow-up inquiry earlier this year. These complaints coincided with media reports that the NJSPCA had lost its tax-exempt status for failing to submit federal tax

forms for three consecutive years and had kept that information from members and, for a time, from donors.

Echoing its previous call to remove the animal-cruelty enforcement role from the SPCAs, the Commission today recommends a complete restructuring of the system to enforce those laws by placing that responsibility, by statute, within the confines of government. Recognizing the important contributions of volunteers who donate time and effort to protect and care for animals, the Commission also recommends creation of a task force to examine issues surrounding animal welfare and protection in New Jersey and also to consider the role the SPCAs should play once the cruelty-law enforcement function is transferred to local government.

This is the second follow-up inquiry launched by the SCI as part of a new initiative to revisit the results of past investigations. The first such report, *Armed and Dangerous – Ten Years Later* – was issued in November 2016. It revealed that legal restrictions on handgun ammunition purchases did not go far enough to ensure that those transactions remain free from abuse by criminal and other unscrupulous elements.



The State Commission of Investigation is an independent New Jersey watchdog agency established in 1968 to investigate organized crime and corruption, waste of tax money and other abuses of the public trust. Copies of public reports are available at the Commission's offices or via its Web site at www.state.nj.us/sci.