



## Open Letter to all New Jersey Citizens

We wish to take this opportunity to speak directly to the citizens, community leaders, legislators, and media outlets of New Jersey. Our country has recently been shaken to its core by the tragic death of George Floyd. Mr. Floyd's murder was indefensible, unjustified, and we unequivocally condemn it. For decades our three New Jersey State Police Associations have been at the forefront of negotiating and instituting common sense police reform policies to ensure our members are fulfilling their duties in a fair and impartial manner so that incidents like Mr. Floyd's murder do not occur in our state.

We have never been, and never will be, in the business of protecting "bad apples" or covering for "rogue cops." New Jersey State Troopers take immense pride in upholding our reputation as the nation's premier law enforcement agency. Our members make this known every single day through thousands of professional interactions. In recent years, the New Jersey State Police and our Associations have received immense public support for embracing common sense reform and excelling under the most stringent review standards.

### *What the NJSP Already Does*

For decades, the New Jersey State Police has operated under some of the strictest policy and procedure standards in the country. These standards bring transparency and accountability to our profession and Troopers have overwhelmingly excelled in meeting and exceeding every aspect of these expectations. Some of these policies and safeguards include, but are not limited to:

- Mandatory use of mobile dash cameras.
- Mandatory use of body cameras (currently in use in all Troops except Troop D; we have fully supported rapidly equipping Troop D with body cameras).
- Mandatory monthly review of random camera footage by numerous levels of supervision.
- Mandatory review of camera footage by numerous levels of supervision for ALL incidents involving uses of force, arrests, vehicle pursuits, searches, canine requests, and any time a Trooper orders a driver or occupant from a vehicle for questioning. These reviews safeguard and promote the constitutionality of Troopers' interactions with the public during critical incidents.
- Each Troop maintains a fully staffed Risk Management Office as an additional layer of review.
- Each Troop maintains an Integrity Officer of the rank of Lieutenant to oversee the Risk Management Office.
- The Office of Law Enforcement Professional Standards is a full-time civilian-staffed office tasked with overseeing the accountability of all reviews and the NJSP's total adherence to policy.
- Early warning system which alerts supervisors when a Trooper uses force 2 times in 12 months even if the uses of force were justified.
- Early warning system which alerts supervisors when a Trooper is involved in 3 internal investigations in 24 months.
- Mandatory tracking of race, gender, and age of every motorist a Trooper stops.
- Mandatory quarterly reports track each Trooper's stop data in comparison to other Troopers at the same station.
- Strict, streamlined, transparent process for the public to report complaints with all information available on the NJSP website; every Trooper is required to carry compliment/complaint forms and provide them upon a citizen's requests; these forms are also available at all State Police Stations; toll-free number on website and form for telephonic complaint reporting; the public may also make a complaint in-person.
- Internal Investigations are handled by the NJSP Office of Professional Standards, a section within the State Police with a full-time staff of enlisted and civilian employees held to strict adherence to the Attorney General's Internal Affairs Policy & Procedures Manual.
- The NJSP proudly maintains a full time Recruiting Unit which focuses a major portion of efforts on recruiting minority applicants and breaking down barriers which may prevent minority candidates from applying for a career as a State Trooper.
- The NJSP proudly maintains a prestigious C.A.L.E.A. accreditation (The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. -- [www.calea.org](http://www.calea.org)).

### *Additional Reforms Are Welcome*

We always stand ready, willing, and able to have the conversations needed to improve our criminal justice system. For example, we welcome the opportunity to participate in the Senate Law & Public Safety Committee's upcoming hearings. Additionally, the General Assembly is currently in the process of advancing several criminal justice reform bills which we have publicly expressed and documented our support for. These include, but are not limited to:

- **A744 (Johnson/Holley)** - Requires law enforcement agencies to provide internal affairs and personnel files of law enforcement officers to other agencies under certain circumstances.
- **A1906/ A4230 (Wimberly/Lopez/Reynolds-Jackson)** - Includes false incrimination and filing false report as a form of bias intimidation.
- **A2394 (Wimberly/Johnson/Holley)** - Requires law enforcement agencies in this State to establish minority recruitment and selection programs; establishes reporting requirement.
- **A3641(Reynolds-Jackson/Murphy/Timberlake)** - Requires DLPS to incorporate implicit bias in cultural diversity training materials for law enforcement officers; makes mandatory cultural diversity training and implicit bias training for law officers.
- **A4263 (Sumter/Holley)** - Clarifies that law enforcement officer who knowingly chokes another person engages in use of deadly force.

## What is an Internal Investigation?

Internal Investigations are thoroughly documented confidential investigations conducted by members of the NJSP Office of Professional Standards for alleged violations of the NJSP Rules & Regulations or Standing Operating Procedures (SOP's). These investigations pertain to internal administrative rule violations only. It is important to understand that any criminal charges or arrests of Troopers, like all citizens, are handled separately by independent local or county prosecutors. As is the case with all citizens, in the event a Trooper is arrested or criminally prosecuted, the Trooper's name becomes part of the public record.

When an Internal Investigation is concluded and the Superintendent of the State Police imposes a suspension for an administrative violation it is incumbent upon the Trooper to voluntarily admit to those charges, accept the discipline, and sign a plea agreement. This agreement ends all rights to an appeal and maintains the confidential nature of the Trooper's identity. If a Trooper does not voluntarily agree to accept the discipline, he or she may appeal to the Office of Administrative Law, State Appellate Court, or further; however, once these appeals are filed the Internal Investigation becomes a matter of public record.

## Attorney General's Plan to Release Troopers' Names

On June 15, 2020, the Attorney General announced his plan to publicly publish the names of all New Jersey State Troopers who received a suspension of more than 5 days in the past 20 years as a result of an Internal Investigation. These names are planned to be attached to the already publicly available Office of Professional Standards case synopsis reports by July 15, 2020. The Attorney General cites "*transparency*" and that "*the public has the right to know that an infraction occurred, and that the underlying issue was corrected before that officer potentially returned to duty.*" These safeguards are already in place. The case synopsis reports are already published. The discipline imposed is already listed. They are all available online.

The retrospective attachment of Troopers' names and republishing old annual reports serves absolutely no legitimate purpose other than to harass, embarrass, and rehash past incidents during a time of severe anti-law enforcement sentiment. It can't possibly be a deterrent because the violations have already occurred and the suspensions have already been served. It makes no sense to unmask and re-punish Troopers for administrative violations committed years ago. Furthermore, a significant portion of names would include former Troopers who have been granted honorable retirements and are no longer involved in law enforcement.

It should be noted, the State of New Jersey completely removes the names of criminal offenders from the Department of Corrections Offender Search web page one year after the completion of their term. Oddly enough, if the Attorney General's order stands, a Trooper with an administrative rule violation many years ago would have their name posted online in perpetuity while an armed robbery ex-convict has their name permanently removed.

Let us be perfectly clear: we are more than willing to consider options such as releasing the names of Troopers who were terminated or who are found guilty of violations such as excessive use of force or racially biased incidents, but we need to be involved in these critical discussions. Our willingness to find sensible solutions in the past proves we do not intend to block common sense reforms. We ask the Attorney General to reconsider his decision and treat Troopers who've previously accepted discipline and served unpaid suspensions fairly. We ask the Attorney General to respect and honor the confidentiality of Troopers' identities in place when they signed legally binding disciplinary agreements and voluntarily chose not to appeal. We ask the Attorney General to protect Troopers and their families from becoming potential targets of violent anti-police activists in their homes, communities, and schools. We ask the Attorney General to rescind this order, meet with us on this topic, and find sensible common ground together as we have done so many times before.

STATE TROOPERS FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION

