



Introduction

**W. Cary Edwards
Chair**

**New Jersey State Commission of Investigation
Public Hearing
November 18, 2008**

Good morning.

Before we get started with the substance of this hearing, I'd like to take a moment to emphasize the SCI's unique role as an independent government and law enforcement watchdog agency.

As you know, we spend a good deal of time investigating matters of corruption and waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars – and those areas, unfortunately, continue to demand our intensive scrutiny.

But our mission is much larger than that.

When the SCI was established by law exactly 40 years ago, it was empowered – above and beyond myriad other responsibilities – to investigate and evaluate the societal scourge known as organized crime. Not as a cop to make arrests. Not as a prosecutor to obtain convictions. But as a fact-finder, as an intelligence-gatherer and as a repository of investigative information and expertise. This we share with those who do make arrests and who do prosecute, those who run the criminal justice system and those who make actual policy, including the Governor and members of the Legislature.

Since its inception, the Commission has conducted cutting-edge investigations into every major aspect of organized crime in New Jersey. And in the course of these investigations, we have learned many things, not the least which is that organized crime is a moving target that constantly poses a threat, constantly re-invents itself and constantly requires vigilance and scrutiny. The value of the SCI in this context is that, unlike any other agency of government, it has been – and continues to be – uniquely positioned to provide New Jersey’s leaders, its law enforcement community and its citizens with the facts they need to effectively counter a dangerous and troubling phenomenon.

Today, we will take this vital component of our mission to a new and important level.

But as we move forward, you should know that this hearing it is but one measure of the Commission's deep and sustained commitment to rooting out and exposing organized crime wherever it may lurk and whatever form it may take.

Thank you.

I now turn the mike over to my distinguished colleague, Commissioner Kathy Flicker.