



QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION (DESPP) COMMISSIONER

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DESPP

DESPP consists of the divisions of (1) Emergency Management and Homeland Security, State Police, Statewide Emergency Telecommunications, and Scientific Services; (2) Police Officer Standards and Training Council; and (3) Fire Prevention and Control Commission.

The DESPP commissioner is the administrative and commanding head of the State Police. The commissioner has all the powers and privileges of a police officer; appoints resident state troopers; licenses professional bondsmen, private detectives, and crane operators, among others; and enforces commercial vehicle laws at weigh stations.

GENERAL AGENCY ISSUES

Published reports suggest that you are inheriting a "troubled" agency.

1. What steps have you taken to learn about the agency?
2. What indicators would you look for to determine the health of the agency?
3. What are the most important things you have learned about the agency?
4. In what areas is the agency deficient? What are its strengths?
5. What innovative activities or strategies would you like to pursue at DESPP to address the agency's deficiencies?
6. Are there things that need to be changed in the agency right now? What could happen if they were not changed?
7. Are there any challenges you believe the agency will need to address in the near future. As the new commissioner, how do you propose to address them?
8. Have you identified any public safety goals that can be better achieved by collaborating with other agencies?

9. What was the best tool that the New York legislature gave you to help you do your job as head of the New York City prison system? What is the best thing that the Connecticut legislature can do to contribute to your success?
10. Some question the wisdom of selecting someone who has extensive experience in correction but not so much in law enforcement to head DESPP. How do you think the role of state police commissioner is similar to, and different from, that of a commissioner of correction? What did you learn from your years as head of prison systems that you think will be most useful to you as commissioner? What "best practices" did you observe or implement that you believe would work well at DESPP?

In the last two decades, the State Police has had eight commissioners and not one has served for more than four years.

1. How does such a high turnover rate at the top affect an agency?
2. What special problems does this pose for you?
3. How do you think this turnover affects police operations?
4. In your experience, how long do you think a manager has to be on the job to make effective and long-lasting changes in an organization?

STATE POLICE DISPATCH OPERATIONS

DESPP has been consolidating its dispatch operations. A bill before the Public Safety and Security Committee seeks to reverse the consolidation.

1. Can you describe the dispatch center consolidation issue? Exactly what functions or services have been consolidated? What was the purpose of the consolidation?
2. Was the purpose accomplished? If not, how long would you expect a change of this nature to be in place before one can determine if it is successful?
3. What have you learned about the issue from staff and others affected by the consolidation?
4. Based on what you have learned, would you advise the legislature to pause and review the consolidation, scrap it, or proceed as planned?
5. Based on our understanding, New York City operates largely out of one dispatch location. What problem, if any, has this posed for the city?

UNION ISSUES

The State Police union has complained about several of your predecessor's policies, including changes in dispatching, troop consolidation, and the minimum staffing level for troopers.

1. As someone who has headed several prison systems, how did you deal with union issues? Please identify any policies that the union opposed, the grounds on which they were opposed, and how they were resolved?
2. How would you describe your relationship with the union in the New York City prison system?
3. How did the union react to your policy of increasing the number of prisoners placed in isolation?
4. Please identify any conciliatory steps you took as agency head that may have been at odds with your own position.
5. What plan or strategy do you have for forging a constructive relationship with the Connecticut State Police union?

MANAGEMENT STYLE

1. What is the biggest risk you have taken as an agency head, and how did things turn out?
2. What reform would you have liked but were unable to introduce in the New York City prison system? What got in the way?
3. A 2010 Department of Justice report identified four of New York's prisons among the top 10 for sexual assaults on inmates. How did things change during your tenure as head of the prison system?
4. According to reports, when you took over the New York City prison system, it was plagued by a number of scandals, including the fatal beating of a prisoner, accusations of correction officer misconduct, and gang activity. How did things change during your tenure?
5. What do you consider to be your major contribution to the New York City prison system?
6. What one word do you think an objective observer would use to define your legacy in the New York City prison system?
7. During the Bloomberg administration, the number of people in solitary confinement [increased](#) even as the overall jail population dropped. Can you explain your role in this increase and your view on the efficacy of solitary confinement?
8. The Arizona Department of Corrections won the Harvard University Innovations in American Government Award for a program you introduced called "The Getting Ready: Keeping Communities Safe." This was the first time a correctional system was recognized in the 20-year history of the award. Can you tell us a little bit about the program?

POLICY ISSUES

Police Power

Some have described New York City's police stop, question, and frisk policy as an invaluable crime reduction tool; others say it is a form of racial profiling. What is your opinion on this policy?

Firearms

In the wake of the Sandy Hook massacre, people have been increasingly focusing on the state's gun laws. As commissioner of the state agency responsible for enforcing these laws, what do you consider to be feasible and effective gun legislation?

Civilian Review Board

A 2006 New York State Police report painted a devastating picture of the State Police response to citizen complaints. Six years later, a 2012 American Civil Liberties Union report was also critical. How would you view the creation of an independent oversight body to monitor and review police policy? What should be the limits of this body's authority?

Hiring Practices

1. The State Police has been criticized on its minority hiring record and, on a number of occasions, accused of racial discrimination.
2. Tell us about your minority hiring record in the agencies that you have headed.
3. As head of the New York City prison system, what was the composition of your management team in terms of gender and ethnicity?
4. Under what circumstances would you consider making minority hiring one of your priorities? What would be the goal and what specific steps would you take to achieve it?

Media Policy

The State Police faced harsh criticism over the time it took to release the final report on the Sandy Hook killings and the quality of the report. Some people suggested that the agency was being deliberately uncooperative in preparing it, and at least one commentator described it "as all but indecipherable."

1. Have you discussed these criticisms with DESPP staff? If so, what was their response?
2. Do you have a specific policy on dealing with the media?
How would you describe your relationship with the media in New York?
3. Describe any situation in which you have been criticized by the media for not being responsive to their request for information.
4. Where do we draw the line in balancing freedom of information with a citizen's right to be protected from an invasion of privacy?

5. You were the new director of the Arizona Department of Corrections in 2004 when two violent inmates took over an armed guards' tower and kept two staff members hostage for 15 days. Some news reports claimed you maintained a near information blackout, successfully refusing information requests. Are these reports correct? If so, why did you maintain the blackout? Looking back at the incident, would you have handled it differently?

Drones

Although most often associated with military operations, drones have numerous law enforcement and civilian applications, including reconnaissance and land surveillance, wildlife tracking, search and rescue operations, disaster response, border patrol, and firefighting.

1. What are the public policy and moral implications of launching drones?
2. How do we weigh the risks versus benefits of this technology?
3. A bill before the Judiciary Committee seeks to regulate drones. What safeguards or protections should any legislation include?
4. Where should we draw the lines regarding the use of drones by government agencies?
5. What reasonable limitations are appropriate for where and when to use drones?
6. Should police use drones only for surveillance?

CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

To be effective, law enforcement agencies must constantly adapt to the changing nature of crime and criminal behavior.

1. What special problems, if any, has the increase in Internet use presented for law enforcement?
2. How well equipped is the State Police to deal with cyber crimes?
3. What kinds of skills do state police officers need today that they did not need 15 years ago?

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