

May 24, 2011

The Hon. Phil Berger  
President Pro Tempore  
North Carolina Senate  
Raleigh, N. C. 27601

RE: SBI and Justice Academy

Dear Senator Berger:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposals in the Senate budget which move the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and the Justice Academy to the new Department of Public Safety and drastically cut the SBI budget. This is bad public policy that endangers public safety and hurts the fight against government corruption.

First, the SBI was established in the Department of Justice as an independent investigative agency. That independence has been vital in allowing agents to work unfettered by pressure or expectations to uncover corruption in the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches. Over the years, SBI agents have investigated incidents of misconduct in the Governor's office, the DMV, the Highway Patrol, the Department of Corrections and other executive agencies along with investigations of several prominent legislators. To have the SBI report to an agency head appointed by the Governor and approved by legislators puts that freedom to investigate at great risk.

Second, the Department of Justice is in the process of making significant improvements in the State Crime Lab that are already solving record numbers of crimes and exonerating innocent people. Soon, the Lab will become only the second in the country to receive dual ISO accreditation and it will have a new lab director. House Bill 27 which you have just passed provides a science advisory board among other important safeguards. Moving the Lab to the new Department of Public Safety would greatly disrupt this process and hamper law enforcement.

Numerous groups, including the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, the North Carolina Police Chiefs Association, the North Carolina Metro Chiefs, the North Carolina Victims Assistance Network and several others have passed resolutions urging that the SBI remain at the Department of Justice.

Just as important, the drastic cuts to the SBI endanger public safety. SBI agents bring specialized expertise to complex, highly challenging cases across North Carolina and work alongside local law enforcement to solve crime. The Senate budget cuts more 50 agents from an already reduced state investigative force at a time when local sheriffs and police say they want more help, not less.

Finally, the Justice Academy has provided excellent law enforcement training on a shoestring budget and there is no reason to move it. I would urge you to contact your local law enforcement and prosecutors to ask their opinion on moving both of the agencies and drastically cutting SBI positions and I believe you will find they oppose it.

I would be glad to give you more information and talk with you about these issues at any time.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Roy Cooper

RAC/sm