



DRAFT STATEMENT FOR THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
8-28-07

My name is Darren Dopp. Until recently, I served as the Communications Director for Governor Eliot Spitzer, a position I held since the start of the administration in January. Before that, I was the Communications Director for the New York State Department of Law for eight years. Before that, I was a Communications Director in the State Assembly for four years and a Press Officer for Governor Mario Cuomo for six years. I started my career as a journalist, and was a correspondent for the Associated Press at the State Capitol.

Through these and other positions, I have more than 20 years experience involving state government. Throughout this time, there has never been any allegation of impropriety or misconduct on my part. Now, however, I have been placed at the center of a controversy dubbed Troopergate. Due to ongoing investigations over the last month, I have been unable to comment publicly. During this time, false information has been reported as fact, I have been maligned repeatedly and my family has suffered greatly. In an effort to clear my name, I ask the Commissioners consider the following points in their review of this matter:

First, I did not concoct media interest in use of state aircraft. This has been a topic of intense media scrutiny for decades. In this regard, reporters routinely examine the use of state aircraft by public officials. This was true for Governors Cuomo and Pataki, and it is true now with Governor Spitzer. In fact, on at least four separate occasions earlier this year, multiple reporters requested and received information from my office on the use of state aircraft and other state vehicles by public officials. Each time reporters received such information from my office, they did their own analysis, made their own judgments about news value and wrote their own articles. - *make articles available?*

blogs in April/May Pataki Spitzer FRS to Calif. + Fla Silda y Dickson

Second, I did not misuse the State Police. I never asked the State Police to spy on Senator Bruno, to gather special information on him, to recreate documents or do anything of the kind. In fact, I never spoke to anyone at the State Police about this matter. I did ask the Executive Chamber's liaison to the State Police, a senior official in the prior administration who was retained by the new administration for his expertise in security and law enforcement matters, for existing public documents that would be responsive to an anticipated Freedom of Information Law request. This followed pointed inquiries from reporters - including persistent questions from a veteran reporter who had written about aircraft use many times before. Since the Governor's office controls state aircraft and is responsible for ensuring appropriate use, I had an obligation to respond. I trusted that the documents provided by the State Police and others were accurate and cleared for release to the media. I provided these public documents to the reporter after conferring with colleagues and determining that it was appropriate to do so.

Third, there was no plot against Senator Bruno. I released the available public documents on all of the elected officials who used state aircraft during the first five months of the year. I was acting on the belief that reporters had right to this information - if for no other reason than it costs New York taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars each and every time the aircraft is used. I never expected that the release of public documents would be considered a dirty trick requiring criminal and ethical investigations.

cost plus, lack of use in an emergency

In retrospect, however, it is clear that given Albany's poisoned political atmosphere, I should have referred reporters to the State Police for any and all information on Senator Bruno. Even though the documents were accurate public records, the fact that I provided information on Senator Bruno allowed the Governor's political rivals and adversaries to allege impropriety. While I deeply regret the ensuing controversy that has kept state government from addressing important problems, I continue to believe that my actions were lawful, ethical and in the spirit of openness the public expects and deserves.

I was asked to say this and its disingenuous.
We control the aircraft. We were responsible
for its proper use - not the SP. It
would be weird to have the SP announce
what we decide.