



Transition Statement

**Patrick E. Hobbs
Commissioner
New Jersey State Commission of Investigation
Public Hearing
December 12, 2006**

Good afternoon.

As we heard this morning, one of the dire consequences of New Jersey's weak regulation of the trade in firearms ammunition is the ease with which bullets of all kinds can fall into the hands of criminals and others bent on real or potential gun violence.

Under the statutory framework as currently written, store owners have little recourse but to complete sales transactions even when approached by suspect individuals. The police, meanwhile, are legally restricted in their ability to intervene under most circumstances involving ammo sales.

To gain a clear understanding of the serious criminal and public-safety issues implicated by this investigation, the Commission sought the assistance and perspective of law enforcement authorities at all levels of government. We heard from some of them this morning. We will continue this important line of inquiry this afternoon, with expert testimony from key state law enforcement officials – Gregory Paw, Director of the New

Jersey Division of Criminal Justice; and Lt. Col. Frank Rodgers of the New Jersey State Police.

We will also hear from investigators who will describe troubling circumstances in which handgun ammunition was legally obtained in New Jersey by individuals linked to gang and drug activity.

As a Commission, we are particularly interested in the perspective of these law enforcement officials with regard to the full scope of this problem as well as the very real challenge of establishing effective oversight of a system fraught with legal loopholes, contradictions and inconsistencies.

Please call the first witness.