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Immediate release

## **SCI REPORT: WASTE AND ABUSE BY ASSOCIATED HUMANE SOCIETIES**

TRENTON – The State Commission of Investigation today released the results of a wide-ranging investigation into waste and abuse by one of New Jersey’s leading nonprofit animal-shelter organizations, Associated Humane Societies (AHS).

The Commission found that AHS officials over the years have engaged in questionable financial practices, conflicts of interest, mismanagement and negligent animal care to the extent that the organization effectively lost sight of its core mission. Despite huge and highly successful fund-raising campaigns, the Commission found, “the history of AHS’s shelter operation has been dominated by deplorable kennel conditions,

inhumane treatment of animals by workers, mismanagement and nonexistent or inadequate medical care.” Although AHS has taken steps in direct response to the investigation to improve its operations, significant work remains.

The Commission’s findings, contained in a 139-page report released today, include:

- Accountability so lax that millions of dollars accumulated in AHS cash and investment accounts while the care and feeding of sick and injured animals went begging.
- Abdication of oversight by Board of Trustees.
- Personal credit card accounts reimbursed for undocumented AHS purchases and AHS gasoline credit cards paid without submission of receipts.
- Contracts awarded without competitive process.
- Fund-raising irregularities.
- Deplorable shelter conditions and inadequate or absent veterinary care for shelter animals.

The Commission called for comprehensive reforms and referred the findings of its investigation to a number of state and federal government

agencies, including various units of the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General, for any action they deem appropriate.

The AHS probe is the second investigation by the Commission of waste and abuse in the area of animal welfare in New Jersey. In April 2001, the Commission issued a report detailing widespread abuse and malfeasance by elements of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs). Those findings resulted in a number of criminal prosecutions and produced a series of reform recommendations to improve and strengthen animal welfare across the state.

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*The State Commission of Investigation is an independent state watchdog agency established in 1968 to investigate organized crime and corruption, waste of tax money and other abuses of the public trust. In addition to the animal-welfare agency investigations, a number of significant probes are ongoing in all areas of the Commission's statutory purview. Copies of reports are available on the Commission's Web site at [www.state.nj.us/sci](http://www.state.nj.us/sci).*

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