

## **Statement of Chair Jose L. Nieves**

This statement is in response to the various news articles relating to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) activities as they relate to former Governor Andrew Cuomo, and specifically, recent media reports that have included unauthorized and improper releases of information by someone associated with JCOPE. These targeted leaks, in addition to allegations made against our professional staff, are nothing more than a coordinated attempt to undermine and discredit the Commission and its staff. I feel I must speak up on behalf of the Commission staff after seeing them painted in a negative and inaccurate light.

JCOPE staff are professional, experienced, hardworking public servants committed to enforcing the ethics and lobbying laws in the state. Any suggestion or insinuation to the contrary is nothing more than a baseless and inaccurate political attack on JCOPE. Equally false and completely baseless is any accusation that the Attorney General's activities in relation to or communications with JCOPE are politically motivated. The Commissioners and staff of JCOPE will continue to work with the Attorney General in a cooperative and constructive manner.

For better or worse, the laws enacted by the Legislature prohibit me or staff from detailing the extensive and far-ranging enforcement work we are doing to carry out our statutory mandate. While this prevents us from answering would-be critics who should and do know better, the fact is that the accusations of inaction on our part are utterly false.

The daily work of JCOPE is done despite the complicated personal and political dynamics that seem to have unfortunately arisen from incredible unnamed sources.

It is unacceptable for anyone associated with JCOPE to think that they may release confidential information and mischaracterize confidential communications just to advance their own personal or political agenda or vendetta by targeting staff and JCOPE Commissioners or disparaging and demeaning JCOPE's important work. Statements made by unnamed sources citing the unauthorized release of confidential information and communications do not reflect the official position of JCOPE, nor should these inaccurate statements be attributed to JCOPE.

-- Jose L. Nieves

Chair, Joint Commission on Public Ethics