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IG REPORT ON SCC PROBLEMS: WHAT TOOK THE STATE SO LONG?

In a [report on the State's operation of the Abbott school construction program](#), Inspector General (IG) Mary Jane Cooper confirms the many of the concerns raised by Education Law Center and others since the program began in 2000. The IG report identifies land acquisition, construction management, and staffing as operational areas in need of serious overhaul by the NJ Schools Construction Corporation (SCC), and makes recommendation for improving SCC management, accounting and supervisory practices.

In the last several months, ELC made numerous attempts, without success, to collect data and other information from SCC about its management and contracting practices. Under the school construction law, the SCC carries out every element of school construction in urban communities, with local school districts and municipalities basically powerless to affect the process.

The IG Report, however, is silent about the failure of Attorney General Peter Harvey to carry out his statutory duty to ensure SCC effectively and efficiently operates the school construction program to benefit the Abbott school children. When the school construction law was passed in 2000, the Legislature assigned the Attorney General the responsibility to "investigate, examine and inspect the activities" of SCC regarding the financing and construction of school facilities and the implementation of the school construction law.

"If the Attorney General had been doing his job, the problems in the IG report could have been brought to light and corrected months, if not years ago," said David Sciarra, ELC Executive Director. "The real question is: why did the Attorney General drop the ball for more than four years? How has the Attorney General spent the millions allocated to carry out its SCC oversight responsibilities? Sadly, IG Cooper ducked these critical question in her report, leaving the Abbott children at continuing risk."

ELC is calling on the Legislature to thoroughly examine the complete breakdown in the State's ability to hold one of its own agencies -- the SCC -- accountable to the children and communities it is obligated to serve. "It is now clear that the State is incapable of holding itself accountable," said Mr. Sciarra. "The Legislature must take the Attorney General to task for this egregious lack of performance."

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