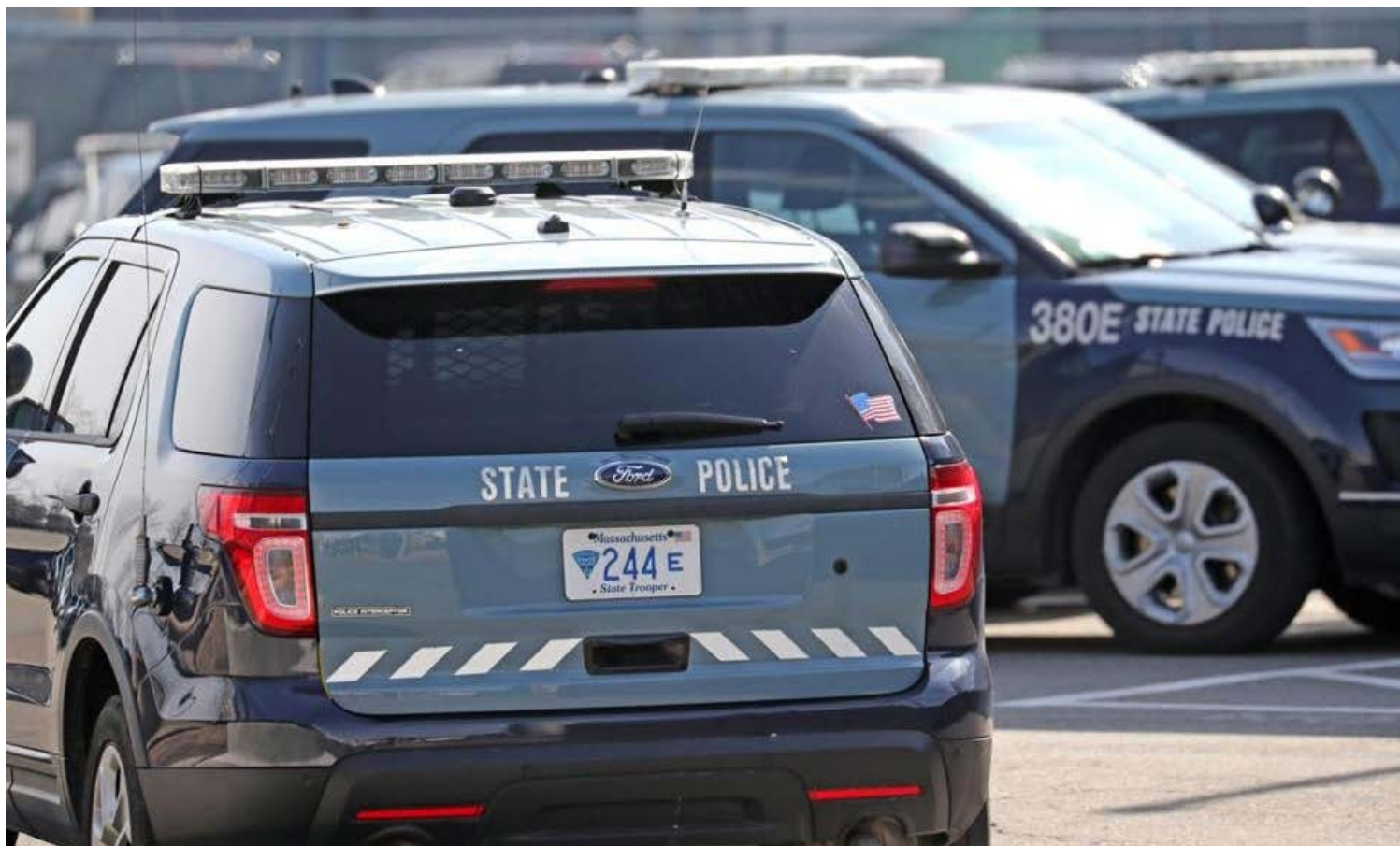




## Mass. launches office to oversee scandal-plagued State Police



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

**A newly passed statute grants the audit division full access to records at the State Police, which must cooperate.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 27, 2018

Massachusetts is launching an independent auditing unit to oversee its largest law enforcement agency following scandals in which State Police troopers who swore to uphold the law acted as if they were above it.

The Internal Special Audit Unit for State Police will have broad powers to ensure department personnel act with integrity and do not abuse taxpayer funds, according to the law legislators passed a month ago

to create it.

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The move by lawmakers came after a series of problems were uncovered at State Police, including a wide-ranging alleged pay theft scheme that has prompted criminal charges against several troopers. Dozens more are under scrutiny.

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“We were developing the House budget right as reports about State Police overtime were coming out, so we felt we needed to have a legislative response to hold the agency accountable,” State Representative Jeffrey Sánchez, chair of the House budget-writing committee, said in a statement.

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Unlike other recent reforms, the special audit unit won't fall under State Police purview. Instead, it will be a division of the Inspector General's Office, an independent state agency.

Funded with \$300,000, the unit will "monitor the quality, efficiency, and integrity of the department's operations, organizational structure, and management functions and seek to prevent, detect, and correct fraud, waste, and abuse in the expenditure of public funds," legislators [wrote](#).

The Inspector General's Office posted the first job listing seeking someone to oversee the unit's day-to-day operations. The director will be paid between \$100,000 and \$110,000 annually and serve a four-year term, [the listing said](#).

The person will manage a team of investigators, attorneys, and analysts. They will monitor the State Police and recommend controls to prevent the misuse of funds, according to the ad, which was posted earlier this month. Originally, the deadline to apply was Aug. 24, but the listing was updated to say applications are due by Sept. 7.

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The office sought a legal professional with at least 10 years of experience as a prosecutor and at least three years managing, the posting said. It said candidates should have “extensive knowledge of and experience with law enforcement operations,” preferably “knowledge of MSP’s operational practices and procedures” along with “experience developing fraud reporting tools.”

“The hope is that we will have a director identified sometime in the fall,” said Jack Meyers, spokesman for Inspector General Glenn Cunha.

The newly passed statute grants the unit full access to records at State Police, which must cooperate. State Police spokesman David Procopio pointed to steps the department has taken internally to bolster accountability but added, “we will provide whatever further cooperation is requested by the inspector general.”

The unit is similar to ones lawmakers created several years ago to monitor for abuse within [programs](#) administered by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and at the state [Department of Transportation](#), including the MBTA.

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For State Police, the additional oversight comes after a [wave of controversies](#).

An ongoing internal review has led the department to accuse 46 current and former troopers of fraud for collecting overtime for hours they didn’t work. Two have pleaded guilty to federal charges, four more have been charged, and others face investigation.

The Globe [reported](#) this month that agency leaders had received warnings about payroll issues in recent years. Despite the red flags, there is scant evidence they acted to address a culture of impunity.

In another high-profile scandal, former Colonel Richard McKeon and three other top commanders [retired](#) amid accusations they forced troopers to remove embarrassing information from a police report involving a judge’s daughter.

Colonel Kerry Gilpin took over the agency last fall. She directed a series of [reforms](#) this spring, including expanding the internal investigations staff, conducting quarterly audits of top-paid troopers, and activating GPS technology in cruisers to help ensure members show up.

Even so, lawmakers pushed forward this summer to create the independent audit unit to monitor the department. Legislators also tucked into the newly passed budget two other measures tied to State Police.

[One](#) was giving University of Massachusetts Boston researchers \$300,000 to study the agency's "overall management structure," Sánchez said. Those researchers could not immediately be reached.

[Another](#) was creating a special commission to recommend ways to bolster transparency and accountability with State Police recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention.

It's tasked with exploring department testing requirements, preferential treatment, how it handles applicants with criminal records, its use of data on race, gender, and sexual orientation, and other topics. The commission's creation comes after controversies, beyond the overtime fraud scandal, that have [raised questions](#) about how State Police selects and promotes personnel.

Senator Paul R. Feeney will co-chair the commission. He said its members, including State Police, are "eager to come together."

"It's important work," said Feeney, a Foxborough Democrat. "We want to make sure the State Police has processes in place that are reflective of our values . . . to make sure the most qualified people at the State Police are receiving promotions and that they are recruiting a workforce that is reflective of the Commonwealth."

In spring 2017, the Globe [detailed](#) claims by women and minority troopers who said the department's workplace culture can be discriminatory, including reports of being overlooked for promotions.

In February, a trooper was [suspended](#) after reports of her drug-dealing past. She [resigned](#) last week after an internal investigation blamed her, and recommended she be fired, for not disclosing her role as a key witness in a marijuana trafficking case.

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