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State Police union president Pullman resigns amid new federal probe



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2018

Dana Pullman, who led the powerful State Police Association of Massachusetts for six years, stepped down Friday, citing “personal reasons.”

By [Andrea Estes](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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The president of the union that represents Massachusetts State Police troopers has resigned amid a federal investigation into possible illegal reimbursement of campaign donations by union members. Dana Pullman, who led the powerful State Police Association of Massachusetts, known by its acronym SPAM, for six years, stepped down Friday, citing “personal reasons.” Union vice president Kevin Fredette will take over until a vote for a permanent president takes place next week.

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“Dana was a fierce advocate for SPAM and worked tirelessly to confront difficult issues facing our members,” wrote Fredette in a memo known as a SPAM-O-GRAM to union members Friday.

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Pullman departs as his union is becoming entangled in the same US attorney’s investigation that has already led to federal charges of overtime abuse against six current and former troopers.

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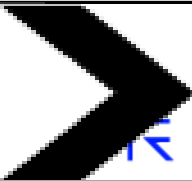
In July, the leader of the overtime probe, Assistant US Attorney Fred Wyshak, subpoenaed all financial records of the union, including bank account information, according to someone with firsthand knowledge. He also sought all documents related to political donations made by the 21 members of the union's executive board.

Prosecutors are looking at whether the union reimbursed its board members for political contributions, according to the person with direct knowledge.

Pullman, through the union's attorney, on Friday denied any wrongdoing in connection with the union's campaign donations. He is not facing any criminal charges.

Pullman's resignation comes at a time when the state's largest police force is already reeling from [multiple scandals](#). Four top State Police officials resigned after being accused of ordering a trooper to remove embarrassing information from a report describing the arrest of a judge's daughter.

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Three former or suspended members of the State Police have already pleaded guilty or agreed to plead guilty to criminal charges in the wide-ranging overtime abuse scandal. The department, in an internal investigation, has accused another 40 of falsifying overtime hours. And last week three retired State Police lieutenants were indicted by a Suffolk County grand jury.

Pullman has said there is plenty of blame to go around for the overtime scandal, but he said State Police leadership has failed to take responsibility.

"Where is the accountability at the top? To consistently assault the lowest common denominator doesn't solve anything," Pullman said recently. "The inmates are running the place, and people are left to their own devices."

Wyshak has subpoenaed documents related to political donations made by SPAM since January 2014, including bank accounts, as well as all filings with the state Office of Campaign and Political Finance. Prosecutors were investigating whether members of SPAM's executive committee were given extra money to make donations or reimbursed in some way for their contributions, according to someone with direct knowledge. It is illegal for anyone to reimburse donors or give them money to make donations because it disguises the true donor, which in this case would be SPAM itself.

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All but one member of the union's executive committee donated money to state candidates, including Governor Charlie Baker, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, and state legislative candidates of both parties, but no one gave more than Pullman, who donated more than \$30,000 between 2008 and 2017. The union itself shelled out \$26,500 to candidates during the same period through its political action committee.

Each of the executive board members receives \$4,000 a year as a stipend to cover expenses, raising the question of whether the stipend is actually reimbursement for the donations.

Prosecutors have also subpoenaed records of a charitable trust operated by Pullman's wife, according to the person with direct knowledge. The Pullman Brothers Family Foundation raises money for sick children. Authorities wanted to see whether the charity was legally created and whether the donations went to the intended recipients. Pullman has denied any wrongdoing in connection with the charity. Even if there was evidence the union leadership was reimbursed for political donations, it's unclear what actions the US attorney's office could take. Union members didn't donate to federal candidates such as members of Congress. And in another investigation, where partners at the [Thornton Law Firm](#) were reimbursed for millions of dollars of political donations with bonuses in the same amount the next day, authorities have taken no action.

Dennis Galvin, a retired State Police major and president of the Massachusetts Association for Professional Law Enforcement, worried that news of the federal investigation will further damage morale among the rank and file. "Troopers are already under a lot of pressure right now," said Galvin, whose group advocates for higher standards for policing. "They're concerned. They feel as though they're being hunted."

Galvin said over the past year, as scandals have rocked the agency, Pullman didn't say enough publicly to defend the troopers or press the department to implement reforms. He hopes Pullman's departure will prompt the union to become more outspoken in trying to improve the culture and accountability at the State Police.

SPAM represents troopers and sergeants who account for about 1,900 of the 2,150 sworn officers across State Police.

Pullman, a trooper, earned \$91,181 last year, state records show. That doesn't include his SPAM salary of more than \$70,000, according to a federal filing, the \$4,000 stipend, and reimbursed expenses.

Pullman, who joined State Police in 1987, served as treasurer of the union from 2008 to 2012, before he was elected as the union's president.

State Police spokesman David Procopio said Friday that Pullman was not facing any active internal investigations.

But he has been investigated — and disciplined — at least one other time during his tenure with State Police.

In 2006, a routine audit of Troop C in Holden found several “discrepancies and/or questionable practices” by Pullman and another trooper who were being paid for extraordinary amounts of paid details.

The officers were allowed to “broker deals with construction companies for overpayments which raise ethical questions,” according to a State Police inspection report. “Most escort details last far less than four hours, yet officers are routinely paid for eight.”

Pullman has denied brokering outside deals, but acknowledged exceeding hourly limits for paid details because, he said, there were many instances in which he could not leave the assignment and no one else was available to work it.

He said he received a five-day suspension without pay.

“If it was so egregious, it would have been more than five days,” Pullman said. “Then they put me back to work there and I worked there for another 17 months until I transferred voluntarily.”

Shelley Murphy and Kay Lazar of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Contact Andrea Estes at andrea.estes@globe.com.

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