

For the first time, state board strips pension of a former State Police trooper convicted in fraud scandal

By **Matt Rocheleau** Updated October 29, 2020, 5:23 p.m.



Retired State Police trooper Paul E. Cesan, of Southwick, left US District Court in July 2016 following his arrest for allegedly pocketing thousands of dollars for overtime hours he didn't work. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

The state's retirement board on Thursday stripped the pension of a veteran

Massachusetts State Police trooper convicted in a high-profile payroll fraud scheme.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/10/29/metro/first-time-state-board-strips-pension-former-state-police-trooper-convicted-fraud-scandal/>

~~Massachusetts State Police trooper convicted in a high-profile payroll fraud scheme,~~

marking the first time the panel has punished an officer implicated in the sprawling scandal.

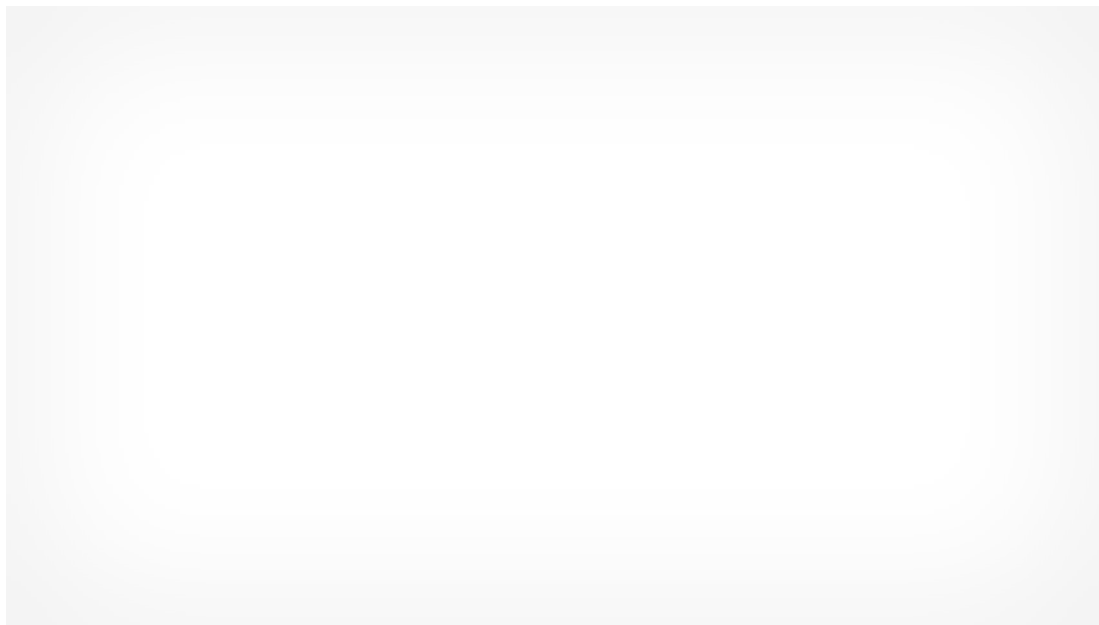
The five-member board voted to take away former trooper Paul Cesan's pension, which would have paid the 52-year-old from Southwick and his former wife nearly \$80,000 a year for the rest of his life. The board rarely strips pension benefits from state employees.

Cesan, a 25-year veteran of the State Police force, retired in March 2018 as the pace of the federal probe quickened. He was arrested in June 2018 and later pleaded guilty in federal court to charges he collected more than \$29,000 for overtime hours he did not actually work in 2016. He was [sentenced](#) to serve a year of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution as well as a \$5,500 fine.

Cesan will still keep \$180,000 he contributed on his own to his pension.

Cesan did not participate in Thursday's hearing, board officials said. He has until late December to appeal the retirement board's decision in court.

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Cesan's attorney, Nick Poser, vowed to fight the ruling. "The forfeiture of this pension violates the excessive fines prohibitions in the federal and Massachusetts constitutions," Poser wrote in an e-mail Thursday evening.

The ruling could set the stage for the board to similarly strip the pensions of four other troopers convicted on criminal charges stemming from the fraud scandal, while a fifth could also lose his pension if convicted.

However, most troopers implicated in the scandal have not been criminally charged, and they [will get to keep their pensions](#).

State Police declined to comment Thursday.

Governor Charlie Baker spokeswoman Sarah Finlaw said in a statement he “believes that any individual who has violated the public’s trust and stolen from taxpayers should be held accountable, including forfeiting their pension as the law provides.”

Of the 46 troopers implicated in the overtime fraud scandal, 10 have been charged criminally, eight of whom pleaded guilty and were sentenced, mostly to probation.

Four of them, including Cesan, had worked long enough within State Police to be eligible for a pension. The retirement board has opened inquiries into their cases and halted pension payments in the interim.

One other trooper has pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing, and another is fighting criminal charges in court. They both retired while under investigation and are continuing to collect pensions while their cases remain open.

When Cesan was sentenced in federal court, he spoke briefly, saying he was “truly sorry.”

“I’d like to apologize, and I accept full responsibility for my actions that have brought me here today,” Cesan said at the June 2019 court hearing. “I know I can do better. I will do better.”

Investigators had found that troopers regularly wrote phony tickets and falsified time sheets to cover up how they had skipped shifts in which they were supposed to have been

sheets to cover up how they had skipped shifts in which they were supposed to have been stopping speeding and aggressive drivers.

The scheme, which one federal judge likened to a criminal conspiracy, allegedly stretched back more than two decades, and was hatched by top commanders who pushed troopers to write citations under an illegal ticket quota system.

As long as troopers handed in enough tickets to meet the quota, supervisors allegedly turned a blind eye and didn't require them to actually work their shifts. The scandal featured a series of other stunning revelations in the past two-plus years, including the department's acknowledgement that it destroyed key documents that could have shown more wrongdoing.

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