



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

Tedisco to NYS Inspector General: “What’s Going on with Schoharie Limo Crash Investigation?”

SENATOR JIM TEDISCO March 7, 2022

March 7, 2022

Hon. Lucy Lang
NYS Inspector General
Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor
Albany, NY 12223

Dear Inspector General Lang:

I am following up on my April 14, 2021 letter to the Office of Inspector General (IG) requesting a full investigation of the state’s role in the events leading up to and following the horrific October 6, 2018 Schoharie limousine crash that tragically took the lives of 20 people, including several of my constituents.

As you know, the National Transportation Safety Board’s (NTSB) report on the accident said that the State Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) share the blame with Prestige limousine operators as they had sufficient opportunities to permanently remove the vehicle from operation, and their efforts failed not only once, but twice. It was reported that vehicle registrations were suspended or revoked for 39 limousines that were operated by other companies similar to Prestige limousine, yet for some reason Prestige was “washed with kid gloves.” In addition, it was also reported that the state, possibly through the executive branch, interfered with the NTSB’s collection of data in compiling the report.

The last update I had on the IG’s investigation of the limo crash was a September 8, 2021 article in the *Albany Times Union* acknowledging an investigation with file #1617-007-2021.

It’s been nearly a year since I requested an investigation into the crash. As you know, the state’s Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force is in place right now actively working to make sure this doesn’t happen again. The full release of the IG’s investigation and recommendations is a critical step to help guide the Task Force and ultimately the executive and legislature take additional steps necessary to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again.

As I ask for a full release of the Office of the Inspector General’s investigation after almost a year, some of the questions that I’m interested in getting answers to include what’s the IG’s timetable to finish it and publicly issue a report and findings? Who has the IG interviewed about the crash? What are your office’s findings? If there was criminal malfeasance on the part of the state, will the IG be submitting evidence to prosecutors? What recommendations would the IG make moving forward?

Now that the pandemic is receding and with spring and summer around the corner, more New Yorkers will be going to special events like proms, weddings, bachelor/bachelorette parties, concerts and other events where they’ll be renting these types of limousines. The families of the Schoharie limo crash victims and the public at large deserve justice and full transparency as to what happened and what needs to be done moving forward.

I urge your office to be fully transparent and respond to this legislative inquiry expeditiously.

Sincerely,

Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C-Glenville) today called on New York State Inspector General Lucy Lang to be fully transparent with the public and the families of the 20 people who tragically lost their lives in the horrific 2018 Schoharie limousine crash, and publicly update New Yorkers with a full accounting of her office’s investigation into the crash.

Tedisco wrote Lang’s predecessor as Inspector General, Letizia Tagliafierro, on April 14, 2021, to formally request her office conduct a full investigation into the October 6, 2018 Schoharie limousine crash that took the lives of 20 people, including several of his constituents.

Senator Tedisco's original 2021 request was in response to the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) report on the accident that said the State Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) share the blame with Prestige limousine operators as they had sufficient opportunities to permanently remove the vehicle from operation, and their efforts failed not only once, but twice. It was reported that vehicle registrations were suspended or revoked for 59 limousines that were operated by other companies similar to Prestige limousine, yet for some reason Prestige was "treated with kid gloves." In addition, it was also reported that the state, possibly through the executive branch, interfered with the NTSB's collection of data in compiling the report.

Tedisco's last update about the Inspector General's investigation was a September 8, 2021 article in the Albany *Times Union* acknowledging an investigation with file #1617-007-2021.

"It's been nearly a year since I called for an investigation into the horrific Schoharie limousine crash that took the lives of 20 beautiful souls and all we've heard from the state Inspector General's Office is crickets. There's a lot of questions about what led to the Schoharie limo crash and what happened afterwards that demand answers. We need to know if this went beyond just negligence and was potentially the result of criminal malfeasance and if there was a cover-up that stretched to the highest levels of state government to bury the truth," said Senator Jim Tedisco.

"The state's Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force is in place right now actively working to make sure this doesn't happen again. The full release of the Inspector General's investigation and recommendations is a critical step to help guide the Task Force and ultimately the executive and legislature take additional steps necessary to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again.

"Specifically, after almost a year, if the investigation is not complete, what's the Inspector General's timetable to finish it and publicly issue a report and findings? Who has the Inspector General interviewed about the crash? What's the Inspector General's findings? If there was criminal malfeasance on the part of the state, will the Inspector General be submitting its evidence to prosecutors? What recommendations would they make moving forward?" said Tedisco.

"Now that the pandemic is receding and with spring and summer around the corner, more New Yorkers will be going to special events like proms, weddings, bachelor/bachelorette parties, concerts and other events where they'll be renting these types of limousines. The families of the Schoharie limo crash victims and the public at large deserve justice and full transparency as to what happened and what needs to be done moving forward," said Senator Tedisco.