



INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE AND POLICY RESEARCH  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 23, 2008

Mr. George L. Schroeder, Director  
Legislative Audit Council  
1331 Elmwood Ave., Suite 315  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. Schroeder:

The distribution of Mr. Ozmint's e-mail of June 17 to potential respondents raises serious concerns about the ability of this approach to achieve results in which we can have any confidence.

I believe that there are two likely impacts of this e-mail. The first is to reduce the response rate. As you are aware, we were concerned about the response rate in the initial design of this survey, and included multiple follow-ups and the maximum protection of anonymity in attempting to achieve a high return rate. Mr. Ozmint's characterization of the questionnaire and obvious disdain for the process are likely to send a message to employees that this survey is something that should be disregarded and the resulting response rate, despite the use of best practices in collecting these data, would be too low to allow us to generalize with any confidence to the population of SCDC employees.

The second likely impact is on the distribution of responses to these questions. While I cannot estimate the magnitude of this effect, the message of the e-mail is that this is a biased survey, driven by a political agenda, that attempts unfairly to attach blame for working conditions at SCDC to superiors and senior leadership. Creating this context will lead respondents to provide more positive responses than they would have had this e-mail not been distributed.

Given these concerns, I do not feel that the results of this survey – no matter how positive or negative they might be – could be reported as accurately reflecting the attitudes and opinions of SCDC staff on these issues. I would recommend, therefore, that LAC not proceed with this survey.

I regret this outcome. I believe that the questionnaire as designed and the data collection procedures would have provided valid and important information as to whether there is a perceived culture of harassment, intimidation, and favoritism in the employment practices at SCDC.