

P&C Editorial: Summerton water contamination points to widespread SC failures beyond water

June 28, 2021

Editorialists,

Your central thesis is correct. An incident here or there is not the issue. It will take decades to uncover them all. South Carolina is administered as if this were a plantation. Administrative and managements systems based on the easily observable, trust-based, naivety, whack-a-mole inquiries and incomplete understanding of what it takes to achieve high level performance; that we don't get and need to have in place to compete at the international level.

Given the drag of a part-time legislature, that also has itself enmeshed in administrative functions, effective legislative oversight requiring independence cannot occur. With all the current entanglements, even a full-time legislature would be ineffective.

The limiting factors are at an even more basic level. You suggest the Legislature needs to address these issues. This cannot happen. The legislators lack the skill set widely enough. "Leadership" does not have an institutional interest to pursue corruption. Moreover, as a time constrained body they are well practice in turning a blind eye and suffer from poor hearing.

Few of the legislative careers will be benefited in rooting out corruption. Consider the member items of little projects of local self-interest. Small minds produce small results. Every legislative session gives annual testimony about the institutionalized lack of accomplishment.

Ask Governor McMaster to form a real AccelerateSC Commission. Not one filled with political cronies as the COVID-19 AccelerateSC panel was constituted. Empowered real independence to examine and report. Without contaminating the reports with self-preservation and cover up of poor administrative performances. Lay out a program to move us from an agricultural plantation system to a modern administrative operation that works for people. Not just those with an inside track, friends, friends of friends and grease.

Ethics should not be a random event. Ethical compliance needs to be 100%.

You wrote, "It would cost too much for the State Ethics Commission to audit all the 22,000 ethics reports that state and local officials are required to file every year." At one time the statement would be understandable. Some loaf is better than none. Our current state of ethics examination and enforcement is between none and an undefined some.

The wide distribution of artificial intelligence applications in auditing and accounting is available. (See attached AICPA Canada, [A CPA's Introduction to AI: From Algorithms To Deep Learning, What You Need To Know](#)). Use technology to identify fraud. AI technology can address this need for enhanced oversight.

The AI technology can be added to the existing SC's administrative, accounting, procurement, and budgeting systems. Even if there are standalone agency applications. The network of AI can be installed and gather the data putting it into local agency stores. Then to travel the data to the state historical storehouse for analysis and future use.

The transaction metadata have tremendous potential to raise the level of administrative performance in our state agencies and local governments. Even DHEC, that you identify as in need of improvement.

If criminal activity is suspected law enforcement would get a judicial writ to conduct surveillances of telephone and email. If authorized by the designated civil and criminal bodies even the online activities keystroke by keystroke.

AI agents can be deployed to detect a larger network of conspirators as is accomplished in major financial, procurement and medical fraud schemes.

The P&C Uncovered series data is speaking to us. We know all too well that doing nothing does not fix anything. We must go to the next steps in our state's administrative modernization. We must not say, "Ain't it awful! Or throw up our hands saying, "What can you do?"

This is a job for our current governor to begin. Or the next governor.

Fred Palm

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- https://www.postandcourier.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-summerton-water-contamination-points-to-widespread-sc-failures-beyond-water/article_f1bb8ce0-d838-11eb-9476-07933edea6e1.html