

Report changed few opinions in PSU community

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The report released Monday by Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane into the three-year investigation of child sex-abuser Jerry Sandusky did little to change opinions of a Pennsylvania State University community still deeply divided over the scandal.

Those who believe mistakes were made in the investigation, including delays by investigators under Gov. Corbett when he was attorney general, continue to believe so, and contend that they see such evidence in the report.

Those who think Corbett and his successors did right by taking time to build a strong case without political motive say the report only buttresses their views.

"This report was geared toward an evaluation as to whether or not [Corbett] had acted improperly. The answer to that is clearly a resounding no," Keith Eckel, a member of Penn State's board of trustees since 2001 and a Lackawanna County farmer, said Tuesday. "I never doubted the governor's actions in this effort because I've always had a high level of respect for his independence when it came to enforcing the law."

But trustee Anthony Lubrano, a onetime board critic elected in the aftermath of the scandal, said the report validated his suspicions that the investigation had unnecessarily dragged on. "If you read the report carefully, you have to conclude that the delays, particularly those in 2010, were suspect," said Lubrano, a Glenmoore businessman.

The Attorney General's Office got the case in March 2009. Sandusky was indicted in November 2011.

"I'd be naive to believe that politics didn't play a role," Lubrano said. The report, he continued, "only furthers the divide between the governor and the Penn State community."

Former federal prosecutor H. Gerald Moulton, who conducted the investigation for Kane, said he found no evidence that Corbett slowed the process for political gain, specifically to help his bid for governor.

Moulton's probe did not extend to the conduct of former top Penn State administrators - Graham B. Spanier, Gary Schultz, and Timothy Curley - who face charges of collaborating to cover up Sandusky's crimes. Moulton, however, noted that investigators were stymied by the school's resistance to comply with requests for information.

Maribeth Roman Schmidt, a spokeswoman for Penn Staters for Responsible Stewardship, a group critical of trustees' post-Sandusky management and supportive of the late coach Joe Paterno, continues to blame Corbett, who as governor sits on the 32-member board of trustees.

"Corbett took too long to get Sandusky off the street. Period," Schmidt, of Gwynedd Valley, said in a statement. "This wasn't a Penn State failure. It was a State of Pennsylvania failure."

Thomas Kline, a lawyer who represented the witness known as Victim 5 at Sandusky's trial, expects the report to fuel national debate on the appropriateness of delaying an arrest of an alleged predator.

Similarly, an earlier Penn State-commissioned report by former FBI Director Louis Freeh that blasted the university's handling of Sandusky allegations spurred talk on colleges' handling of assault cases.

Eckel said that if investigators had moved more quickly, they might not have been as successful. Because of their efforts, he pointed out, Sandusky is serving a minimum of 30 years in prison for sexually assaulting young boys.