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**Anne Milgram**  
 Attorney General

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#### For Immediate Release:

March 19, 2008

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## Missing Persons DNA Identification Project Launched - Federally-supported NJ State Police program carries out provisions of Patricia's Law

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey State Police has launched a DNA identification project for long-term missing and unidentified deceased persons that supports the implementation of the state's new Patricia's Law, which sets new guidelines for police to follow in missing persons' cases, including collecting DNA material and entering it into a national database.

The State Police project is designed to serve as a national model and is supported by a National Institute of Justice grant that funds a program at the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification, which runs DNA analysis for the program. The project, nationally known as the President's DNA Initiative: Advancing Justice through DNA Technology, was launched to solve long-term missing and unidentified deceased persons investigations. The State Police Missing Persons Unit is the lead agency for the DNA identification project.

Patricia's Law was signed into law by Gov. Jon S. Corzine in January. The Governor presided at a ceremonial bill signing today in Bogota to draw attention to the new legislation. Primary sponsors of Patricia's Law were State Sen. Loretta Weinberg and Assembly members Valerie Vainieri Huttie, Joan Voss and Linda Greenstein. The law was named after Patricia Marie Viola, who disappeared from her Bogota neighborhood more than seven years ago.

The State Police long-term missing and unidentified deceased persons DNA identification project has established detailed best practices protocols and investigative guidelines for law enforcement to follow when handling reports of missing persons or unidentified deceased human remains. Patricia's Law demands that all reports of missing persons shall be immediately investigated without delay.

The guidelines details a category of "high risk" missing persons, which includes children, people in need of medical attention, and mentally impaired persons.

DNA material collected from personal items of the missing person (like clothing, toothbrushes or hairbrushes) and DNA from family members is entered into a national DNA Index system known as CODIS for the Combined DNA Index System.

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There are approximately 19,000 missing persons reported in NJ each year and entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computerized database. Approximately 1,500 long-term missing persons, or people missing for more than 30 days, are reported annually. In addition, there are 272 active unidentified deceased cases.

The State Police Missing Persons Unit coordinates with county prosecutors and distributes DNA collection kits and lists of all long-term missing person cases to county coordinators for dissemination to local law police departments. The project also coordinates unidentified deceased cases with the state, regional, and county medical examiner offices.

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