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Missing persons reports advance under new law

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BY JASON TSAI

STAFF WRITER



Police must accept without delay any report of a missing person and immediately take down identifying information about the individual, under a measure signed Wednesday by Gov. Corzine at Bogota Borough Hall.



DANIELLE P. RICHARDS / THE RECORD

Bogota's Jim Viola, whose wife went missing several years ago, thanks Gov. Corzine for signing "Patricia's Law."

The "Patricia's Law" provision – named for a woman who remains missing after leaving her borough home in 2001 – ensures police cannot refuse to accept such reports and must notify the loved one's family of support services.

Another initiative announced Wednesday will have police and medical examiner's offices taking DNA samples of the state's roughly 1,500 missing persons and 272 unidentified deceased to be cross-matched, authorities said.

The provisions come more than seven years after 42-year-old Patricia Viola was reported missing after leaving her Chestnut Avenue home. The law was approved in January, but signed Wednesday by Corzine. It won't take effect for several more months.

Her husband, Jim, has since then continued his tireless search for her and, in recent years, pushed this legislation that makes New Jersey the third state nationwide to require law enforcement to act immediately on all missing person's reports.

"I want to thank Jim and his family for all the efforts that they've put together to take a tragedy and turn it into a greater opportunity for our broader society," Corzine said before a packed audience at council chambers.

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