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RELEASE: April 3, 1998

**GOVERNOR URGES CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR REP. FRANKS'
MEASURE MAKING RETURN OF JOANN CHESIMARD PRIORITY IN U.S.
POLICY ON CUBA**

Gov. Christie Whitman today in a letter to members of the U.S. Congress highlighted the need for increased federal cooperation in the state's effort to apprehend fugitive Joanne Chesimard, presently at large in Cuba. The Governor urged members to support a resolution sponsored by Rep. Bob Franks (R-New Jersey) that would make the extradition of Chesimard and all U.S. fugitives a top priority of the federal government.

Chesimard, who was convicted in the 1973 murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster, escaped from state prison in 1979. Since 1984 she has been living freely in Cuba. Earlier this year she granted an exclusive interview to WNBC in New York where she showcased her freedom in Cuba.

As a result of the interview, Gov. Whitman wrote to President Clinton urging him to make Chesimard's return a necessary first condition to any further normalization of relations with Cuba. The Governor also wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno asking for stepped-up involvement by the Justice Department in the capture and return of Chesimard. The Governor has also posted a \$50,000 reward for Chesimard's return to New Jersey.

Yesterday, the Cuban government told Reuters News Service that it would not return Chesimard to the United States.