

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: January 5, 1999

Governor Whitman Signs Laws to Aid Law Enforcement Officers

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation at a State House ceremony, recognizing the danger and stress law enforcement officers face everyday while they serve and protect communities around the state.

"I would like to thank the men and the women in the law enforcement community. Their heroic work enables us to talk about historic lows in crime. Their performance, day in and day out, confirms something I've always believed: New Jersey has the finest law enforcement community in the country," Gov. Whitman said. "Today, I am happy to sign into law two pieces of legislation that will do even more to honor and support our law enforcement officers."

The Governor signed the following bills during a ceremony in which she also announced the state's most recent crime statistics have dropped to the lowest levels in 24 years.

A-1799, sponsored by Assembly Members Clare M. Farragher (R- Monmouth) and Steve Corodemus (R-Monmouth) and Senators Joseph M. Kyrillos, Jr. (R-Middlesex/ Monmouth) and Norman M. Robertson (R- Essex/Passaic), allows counties to provide crisis intervention programs for law enforcement officers.

The bill will permit an agency, independent of municipal or county law enforcement agencies, to be formed for use by any officer involved in an incident producing personal or job-related depression, anxiety, or other emotional strains. Agency services will include post-traumatic debriefing and counseling services. Counties choosing to establish a program must also create an advisory council to assist with program implementation.

In addition, the legislation requires an officer involved in a critical incident, such as the firing of a weapon, a hostage situation, or incident involving serious or fatal injuries to a juvenile, to utilize the services before returning to active duty.

A-1801, sponsored by Assembly Members Clare M. Farragher (R- Monmouth) and Steve Corodemus (R-Monmouth) and Senators Joseph M. Kyrillos, Jr. (R-Middlesex/ Monmouth) and Norman M. Robertson (R- Essex/Passaic) directs Personnel Commissioner Janice Mintz to establish a 24-hour telephone hotline for law enforcement officers dealing with emotional or psychological problems.

Callers will speak to people familiar with the problems likely to trouble law enforcement officers. The hotline will maintain the confidentiality of callers, but will allow for the tracking of officers who exhibit severe problems that may put themselves or others at risk. Funding for the hotline will be provided to the Department of Personnel from the Body Armor Replacement Fund.