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NEW JERSEY STATE POLICE OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

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NEW JERSEY CRIME RATE CONTINUES DOWNWARD TREND IN 1999

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Totowa - Governor Christie Whitman today announced that preliminary crime statistics for the first six months of 1999 continue to show a significant drop in all violent and non-violent crime categories and in all areas of the state.

According to the New Jersey State Police preliminary six-month Uniform Crime Report, overall crime dropped 10 percent, violent crime declined 9 percent and non-violent crime decreased 10 percent when compared to crime rates for the same period last year reductions that mirror the national crime averages released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation

in December.

The Uniform Crime Report statistics for the first six months of 1999 show that our crime-fighting efforts continue to pay off in making New Jersey a safer place in which to live, work and raise a family, Gov. Whitman said.

The laws we have passed during my tenure have certainly helped. More criminals are staying in prison, and for longer terms. And a strong economy forged by creating more jobs is one of the best ways to reduce crime. We've done plenty of that. But just as certain, the lion's share of the credit must go to the men and women of our law enforcement community, she said.

Behind each of these decreases stand law enforcement officers who risk their lives. It's their hard work and dedication that is most directly responsible for keeping criminals off the streets and making our communities safer.

Although New Jersey can take pride in the fact that the crime rate continues to drop, we cannot, however, take comfort. As long as innocent lives are being lost each year to violence, as long as people feel threatened by crime, we must redouble our efforts to protect our citizens, the Governor said.

Joining Governor Whitman to announce the preliminary 1999 Uniform Crime Report statistics were Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr., Colonel Carson J. Dunbar, Jr., Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Chief Thomas B. Michaud, First Vice-President/President Elect, New Jersey Chiefs of Police Association, and representatives of New Jersey's law enforcement community.

Given these half-year statistics, we are optimistic that, for the seventh consecutive year, crime in New Jersey will continue its welcome downward trend, said Attorney General Farmer.

The statistics are impressive in and of themselves. But they are more impressive when you think about what they represent for New Jerseyans. They represent safer streets and safer neighborhoods; and they represent a greater feeling of security for citizens, he said. Finally, as the Governor pointed out, these figures embody the tireless efforts of New Jersey's law enforcement community. We cannot underestimate or over-praise the unflagging devotion of local, county and state law enforcement agencies to fighting crime in this state.

Law enforcement throughout our state can take pride in the half-year statistics being released today. These numbers are more than just dry statistics. They represent a better quality of life for the people in the communities we serve, and we intend to do our best to see that this

downward trend continues into the future, Chief Michaud said.

According to Colonel Dunbar, the six-month statistics should be viewed with some caution since they are only a "window" on the projected crime rate for the entire year.

This downward trend, which parallels national and regional decreases, reflects our commitment to balancing tough sanctions against people who break the law with innovative law enforcement initiatives, Dunbar said.

The preliminary crime report, prepared by the New Jersey State Police Uniform Crime Reporting Unit, details the statewide crime index for various categories of crime, including violent and non-violent offenses, urban, suburban and rural crime, arson, domestic violence and bias crime.

According to the State Police Uniform Crime Report, overall crime for the six-month period of Jan.-June, 1999 decreased 10 percent - from 143,470 index offenses reported during the first six-months of 1998 to 129,009 reported index offenses for the first six months of 1999.

The violent crime categories of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault decreased 9 percent to the lowest level since 1978 with a reported 15,894 offenses during the Jan.-June, 1999 report period (down from the 17,543 violent crimes reported during Jan.-June, 1998).

Similarly, the non-violent crime group of burglary, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft decreased 10 percent from 125,927 offenses recorded during Jan.-June, 1998 vs. 113,115 offenses recorded during the same period in 1999. The individual categories reported the following:

- **Murder** dropped 10 percent (140 reported murders Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 155 reported murders Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Rape** declined by 11 percent (699 reported offenses Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 787 offenses reported Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Robbery** decreased 12 percent (6,502 reported incidents Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 7,386 reported incidents Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Aggravated Assault** dropped 7 percent (8,553 offenses reported Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 9,215 offenses reported Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Burglary** decreased 19 percent (21,492 reported crimes Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 26,595 reported crimes Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Larceny/Theft** dropped 9 percent (74,868 reported crimes Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 82,090 reported crimes Jan.-June, 1998);
- **Motor Vehicle Theft** dropped 3 percent (16,755 reported offenses Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 17,242 reported offenses Jan.-June, 1998).

There were 39,069 domestic violence offenses reported to police during the first six months of 1999 a one percent increase when compared to the 38,836 offenses recorded for the same period in 1998. Additionally, bias crime realized an eight percent drop from 384 reported incidents Jan.-June, 1998 to 353 incidents for the first six months of 1999.

The preliminary crime statistics also show a continuing decline in juvenile arrests. Violent juvenile crimes reported for the first six months of 1999 dropped by 194 arrests (1,863 arrests Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 2,057 arrests Jan.-June 1998) or 9 percent. Total juvenile arrests for all index crimes declined 12 percent from the previous six-month report (7,614 arrests Jan.-June, 1999 vs. 8,658 arrests Jan.-June 1998). Finally, arrests of juvenile offenders for all crimes dropped by 2,584 arrests or 6 percent (36,136 arrests for Jan.-June 1999 vs. 38,720 arrests for Jan.-June 1998).

Twenty of New Jersey's 21 counties reported declining crime rates, with Hunterdon and Union counties reporting a 20 percent drop-off. (Only Passaic County realized a slight increase of less than one-half of one percent.) Similarly, crime decreases were recorded in the categories of urban (-9 percent), suburban (-12 percent) and rural (-9 percent) crime.

The six-month report is compiled from crime statistics and information supplied by New Jersey's 481 full-time municipal police departments, three part-time municipal police departments and the State Police (reporting for 73 municipalities without local police services).

Additional arrest information and data are received from the Division of Criminal Justice, New Jersey's 21 county prosecutors' offices, sheriffs' departments, county police departments and county park police agencies. Collectively, a total of 556 law enforcement agencies submit reports to the State Police Uniform Crime Reporting Unit.

Only county data is released as part of the six-month report; detailed municipal data is not released until the State Police issue the full year Uniform Crime Report.

The six-month Uniform Crime Report is available via the New Jersey State Police Web Page (News & Events) at www.njsp.org.

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