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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Signs Legislation Protecting Drivers' Privacy and a Law Allowing Crime Victims to Use Post Office Addresses on Their Licenses

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed into law the New Jersey Drivers' Privacy Protection Act prohibiting the state Division of Motor Vehicles from giving personal information about New Jersey drivers to the general public. She also signed a bill that allows stalking, sexual assault or domestic violence victims to use a post office box on their driver's license and registration.

S-1302 / A-2049 sponsored by Senators Andrew R. Ciesla (R- Monmouth/Ocean) and Nicholas J. Sacco (D-Bergen/ Hudson) and Assembly members Anthony R. Bucco (R-Morris) and Anthony Impreveduto (D-Bergen/Hudson), establishes fourth degree penalties for people who access and use driver information for purposes not authorized by law. People who violate the law will also be subject to civil penalties.

"These bills are important for the safety of citizens of this state," Gov. Whitman said. "People allowed to access driver information will now be required to apply to the state for the information and will undergo a review process to insure that they have a legitimate need for the information. And now, victims of sexual assault or domestic violence are assured that they have greater protection from those who would harm or have harmed them."

The Drivers' Privacy Protection Act provides that people entitled to receive driver information are required by the law to keep the information confidential, unless otherwise stipulated in the law. A person authorized to obtain social security numbers may not release the numbers unless they have proper authorization as outlined by state or federal law.

The act puts New Jersey in compliance with a federal mandate that directed states to adopt laws prohibiting disclosure of personal information contained in motor vehicle records. The federal act required that states adopt their laws by September of this year.

New Jersey's law provides greater protection than the federal law because it further limits who can obtain access to driver information, requires an application process for those who request data and provides penalties for violations of the law.

Those identified in the bill as having a legitimate need to access driver information include:

- Governmental entities;
- Businesses that use DMV data to verify information submitted by the driver or correct information for purposes of preventing fraud or pursuing legal remedies;
- People who need the information for civil, criminal, administrative or arbitration proceeding;
- Researchers who agree not to publish, redisclose or use the information to contact individuals;
- Insurers;
- Tow truck operators;
- Employers requiring verification for commercial drivers licenses;
- Private toll transportation facilities;

Anyone who has written consent from a driver to release information;

Automotive business manufacturers and sellers who service mail communications for their products, provided that the drivers have been given an opportunity to prohibit such use.

A-2634 / S-1806 sponsored by Assembly members Rose Heck (R- Bergen) and Anthony R. Bucco (R-Morris) and Senator Andrew R. Ciesla (R-Monmouth/Ocean), grants permission to victims of stalking, sexual assault or domestic violence to use a post office box, or a friend or a family member's address as their official address of record. Other residents will also be allowed to use an alternate address if the director of the Division of Motor Vehicles deems that they have a good reason for doing so.

In such instances, the DMV will not be allowed to disseminate a person's street address except to a court, a law enforcement agency or an agency authorized by law to access the motor vehicle records.

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