



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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### **Gov. Christie Whitman and New York Gov. Pataki Announce Cooperative Effort to Assist New Jersey Holocaust Survivors or their Heirs Recovery Money Owed from Swiss Banks**

New Jersey Gov. Christie Whitman and New York Gov. George Pataki today announced a cooperative effort between the New York State Banking Department Holocaust Claims Processing Office and her administration to assist New Jersey residents who are Holocaust survivors or their heirs recover money owed from Swiss banks or from European insurance companies.

Gov. Whitman instructed the commissioners of the Department of Banking and Insurance and the Department of Labor to use their resources to launch a community education effort to urge New Jerseyans to contact the claims processing office to learn how to file a claim.

"I commend Governor Pataki and the Banking Department of the State of New York for this humanitarian effort. They have made this service available to any and all who may have claims, no matter where they live. It is my duty to make sure that New Jersey residents are aware of the office and that they know how to contact the staff for help," Gov. Whitman said.

"New York was the only state in the union where Swiss banks were located during the World War II era, and we think it is appropriate that the claims processing office be housed here. But we must spread the word around the country," said Gov. Pataki.

"We are very pleased that Gov. Whitman is devoting resources to this important project. Educating survivors and heirs about the claims processing office is the key to helping them. The Governor and her commissioners are to be commended," Pataki added.

The Department of Banking and Insurance established a "hot button" --or direct connection-- from their internet home page to the New York Banking Department's claims processing office home page.

"Our internet site receives approximately 10,000 visitors every month," said Banking and Insurance Commissioner Elizabeth Randall.

"We hope that this direct connection will alert our visitors to the claims processing office and encourage survivors and heirs who may be owed money to file a claim form," Randall added.

In addition, the department has contacted the New Jersey Association of Counties and the New Jersey Bankers Association to solicit their help in publicizing the phone numbers and addresses of the claims center.

The Department of Labor has committed the use of computers at their "One Stop" employment services sites for those who do not have access to the internet in their homes. Computers at 280 locations around the state have internet access and will be made available, free of charge, to those who wish to contact the claims processing office for information and forms available on the internet.

"Our 'One Stop' sites were set up to help people from New Jersey and we are honored to be able to add this new and innovative use of our computers to the services we provide," said Commissioner Mel Gelade.

"We look forward to receiving our first visitor who connects to the Holocaust Claims Processing Office internet site and hope to assist each and every New Jerseyan who needs help," he added.

The Holocaust Claims Processing Office opened on Sept. 15 and is set up to act as an advocate for survivors and their heirs in recovering assets from Swiss banks and European insurance companies. Staff will assist claimants in filing forms and will keep them updated on the progress of their claims. This assistance will alleviate burdens and costs that claimants proceeding on their own would have encountered.

Anyone believing that assets belonging to them or a family member are currently being held by a Swiss banks may submit a claim, providing the assets were held or deposited between Jan. 1, 1933 and May 9, 1945. Assets include both accounts and property in safe deposit boxes. In July, The Swiss Bankers Association released the names of more than 2,000 dormant bank accounts dating back to the Holocaust era. Information about these accounts is available through the claims processing office.

Anyone believing that proceeds from an insurance policy belonging to them or a loved one are being held by a European insurance company may submit a claim. The policy must have been in force between Jan. 1, 1933 and May 9, 1945.

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