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STATE OF OHIO

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MEDIA RELEASE

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CORRECTION: In an earlier version of this release issued today to state media, Ohio State Representative Timothy J. DeGeeter (D-Parma, 15th District) was incorrectly identified as Ohio's project manager and advisor. He will instead serve as the legislative member of the Ohio delegation.

OHIO SELECTED AS STATE PARTNER FOR NATIONAL DNA POLICY PROJECT

- NGA's "Improving Forensic DNA Policy Project" to enhance DNA analysis as a crime solving tool -

COLUMBUS - The National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) has selected Ohio as one of five states to participate as a state partner in a new project designed to enhance forensic DNA analysis as a crime solving tool among national public safety and law enforcement organizations.

Although DNA can be a key piece of evidence in solving crimes and identifying criminals and victims of violent crime, its full potential as a crime-fighting tool remains unrealized. Massive backlogs of unanalyzed DNA samples currently sit inactive in crime labs across the country. Compounding the problem, existing DNA projects may need to identify new sources of funding because federal funds that helped support lab operations are due to sunset in 2009.

Through the *Improving Forensic DNA Policy Project*, state teams in Florida, Kentucky, New York, Ohio and Washington will be comprised of representatives from governor's offices, crime labs, law enforcement, state legislatures, state justice agencies and prosecutor's and public defender's offices. **Ohio State Representative Timothy J. DeGeeter (D-Parma, 15th District) will serve as the legislative member of the Ohio delegation.** Numerous exercises are being designed to help develop state policies that will strengthen and improve existing forensic DNA programs including:

- Expanding DNA databases to include the collection of evidence from high-volume crimes;
- Adding missing persons and unidentified human remains to DNA databases; and,
- Developing sustainable sources of funding for existing forensic DNA program.

"We are pleased to have been chosen from a national contingency of applicants. This announcement demonstrates Governor Strickland's commitment to Ohio being a national leader in criminal justice programs and services," said Henry Guzmán, Director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. "I personally thank Rep. Tim DeGeeter for his commitment to serve Ohioans by promoting public safety through working on this project to strengthen and improve forensic DNA initiatives in Ohio."

As part of the project, Ohio will be working closely with other states to share ideas, compare and analyze policy proposals, and gain valuable information about best practices and police options from NGA Center staff as well as outside experts. The first project meeting will take place in fall 2007.

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