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PRESS RELEASE

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Chief meets with Governor on Death Penalty Legislation

New Hartford Police Chief Raymond L. Philo met with Governor Eliot Spitzer, Assembly and Senate Leaders yesterday on the Death Penalty Legislation. Chief Philo was accompanied by Lieutenant Timothy P. O'Neill, Senator Joseph Griffo, Mayor Timothy Julian, members of the Utica Police Department, as well as Family members of slain Officers Joseph Corr, Andrew Sperr and Thomas Lindsey.

Assemblyman David Townsend is sponsoring Death Penalty Legislation in the State Assembly, and Senator Joseph Griffo is supporting Death Penalty Legislation in the State Senate.

At a Press Conference held in the State Capitol today Chief Philo made the following remarks regarding his support for the death penalty.

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today on the issue of the death penalty.

As a Police Chief who had a police officer shot and killed in the line of duty, I know first-hand the horrific impact on the family, the police officers and the community a death like this has.

On the evening of February 27, 2006, New Hartford Police Officer Joseph Corr, age 30, was dispatched to a robbery in progress at a local jewelry store. He engaged the fleeing suspects in a high-speed chase, and when they crashed their vehicle, Officer Corr pursued one of the suspects on foot. That suspect shot Officer Corr, killing him instantly.

The individuals in this robbery were part of a criminal organization operating out of the Philadelphia, PA area. The individual who shot and killed Officer Corr had previously been convicted and spent time in prison for the murder of a 17 year old girl.

On March 1, 2006, just two days after the murder of Officer Corr, State Trooper Andrew Sperr was shot and killed when he confronted two individuals who had just committed a bank robbery in an upstate New York community.

On April 12, 2007, Utica Police Officer Thomas Lindsey, age 32, was shot and killed during a traffic stop. The search for his murderer is still on going.

The torrent of violent attacks on our law enforcement officers simply cannot be tolerated or go under-punished.

The road to this place today has been a sad and difficult journey for us. Unless you have walked in our shoes, you can never truly understand the emotion and pain of losing a productive, energetic and competent young police officer.

Death is the great uncertainty in life. That is why we fear it. Death is the ultimate deterrent; that is why I support the death penalty in certain cases, including the murder of an on-duty police officer.

Paradoxically, the death penalty can actually save lives by providing the necessary deterrent to potential murderers. The punishment paradigms of the past simply are not working. Law enforcement officers are symbolic of the rule of law, and the authority of the government. That is why the murder of a police officer or peace officer is so egregious, worthy of special legislation.

Therefore, I would respectfully request that the legislature and the Governor work cooperatively to enact a fair and just death penalty bill that will pass constitutional muster. Let's not allow the deaths of Officer Corr, Andrew Sperr and Thomas Lindsey be in vein. Thank you.

At the end of the meeting with Governor Spitzer, Chief Philo presented the Governor with a "Challenge Coin" honoring the sacrifice of Officer Joseph Corr.