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NJASRO To Attend White House Conference On School Safety

October 9, 2006, Chevy Chase, MD– The New Jersey Association of School Resource Officers (NJASRO), the state’s leading organization of school resource and school safety officials, has been invited to attend the National School Safety Conference in Chevy Chase, MD at the request of the White House. The conference, which is being hosted by the President and First Lady, was developed in response to a series of school shootings that occurred across the country over the past month. Panel discussions are being moderated by Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Fewer than 250 parents, teachers, school administrators, law enforcement and other experts from around the nation will take part. NJASRO Executive Director Robert Tessaro will represent the organization at the meeting.

"NJASRO supports the efforts of the White House to develop a plan to help combat the wave of school violence that has been infecting the United States," said Sgt. John Morella, NJASRO President. "Our organization represents the police officers who walk the halls of New Jersey schools and are often the first responders in cases of violence. We are asking that the federal government devote as much resources to protecting our schools as our bridges, tunnels and infrastructures."

Over the past five years NJASRO has trained more than 600 officers to work in New Jersey Public Schools. School Resource Officers serve three roles in schools: educators, counselors, and law enforcement officers. There are currently SROs in more than 260 school districts in New Jersey, and is increasing every month. The New Jersey Department of Education reported that in 2005 more than 11,000 violent incidents occurred in the state’s public schools, 1,500 of them involving a weapon. In 2005 a school safety officer was shot and killed outside of a Newark high school after breaking up a fight among students. National survey’s of SRO’s find that as many as 92% of officers who work in school believe that violent crimes are being underreported.

“Never has the need for school resource officer training been more necessary than it is today,” said Robert Tessaro, NJASRO Executive Director. “The events of the past few weeks have shown us how vulnerable our schools can be if the proper steps are not taken to ensure the safety of the students and staff.”

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NJASRO supports the following:

- Increased federal money for school resource officer training programs;
- Federal grants to help support cities to pay for SROs in their school district;
- Mandated education for school faculty and administrators on how to deal with crisis situations;
- A universal reporting system for school violent incidents across the country;
- To mandate active school shooter training for all officers.

The 4th Annual NJASRO Statewide School Safety Training Conference will be held in Atlantic City Nov. 8-10. Several hundred SROs, juvenile officers, law enforcement, school administrators, school board members, and community leaders from across the state are expected to attend. The media is invited to attend the conference, including an active shooter training session being held at Atlantic City High School on Nov. 10.

School resource officers are full-time police officers permanently assigned to a school or set of schools to serve as a law enforcement officer. In addition to regular law enforcement duties, school resource officers help educate pupils on their rights and responsibilities under the law, serve as a liaison between law enforcement and school administration, conduct investigations occurring in a school or on school property, conduct school security audits, serve as a liaison between students and social service agencies, assist school administration and faculty in developing criminal justice programs, serve as a law related counselor and assist with school activities.

About NJASRO:

The New Jersey Association of School Resource Officers (N.J.A.S.R.O.) is a not-for-profit organization for school based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security/safety professionals working as partners to protect students, school faculty and staff and the schools they attend. The true and tested strength in the School Resource Officer program is that it is much more than a curriculum. The SRO Concept can easily be adapted to the needs of ANY community, desiring safe schools, and effective community partnerships. For more information go to www.NJASRO.org.

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