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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN CONVENES DNA PROJECT TO ADDRESS GAPS IN DNA DATABASE

*Tens of Thousands of Felons Believed Missing From Database – Impeding
State’s Efforts to Solve Crimes and Exonerate the Innocent*

Chicago – Concerned that the DNA samples of tens of thousands of Illinois felons are missing from the State of Illinois DNA database, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced the creation of the Illinois DNA Accountability Project (IDAP). The accountability project will undertake the first-of-its-kind assessment of the Illinois DNA database, identifying the scope of missing DNA samples, pinpointing any current collection roadblocks, and developing systems for locating and collecting missing samples.

Madigan has asked a team of law enforcement professionals to work with her office on this Project. Meeting as a group for the first time today were representatives of the Illinois Sheriff’s Association, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, Cook County State’s Attorney Dick Devine’s Office, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart’s Office, the U.S. Marshal’s Fugitive Task Force and the Chicago Police Department.

“It is imperative that our state’s DNA database be as complete and accurate as possible to ensure that we are locating and convicting those who committed crimes and exonerating those who are not guilty,” Madigan said. “By bringing together law enforcement and prosecutors from around the state, I am confident that we can eliminate gaps in the database and make it a more effective tool to use in keeping our communities safe.”

"The potential gain to law enforcement is immeasurable. Certainly, we at the Cook County Sheriff's Office will work with the State in achieving 100 percent compliance," said Thomas J. Dart, Cook County Sheriff.

Illinois implemented the “All Felons DNA Law” in 2002, significantly expanding the pool of those required to provide DNA samples to include everyone convicted of a felony offense. The law required every person newly convicted of a felony to submit a DNA specimen. The law also required those already incarcerated in an Illinois Department of Corrections’ (IDOC) facility to submit a DNA specimen prior to release.

During the months following the law’s effective date, however, implementation was slow and hampered by a lack of DNA kits and trained staff to collect blood specimens across the state. As a result, during the initial months of the All Felons DNA Law, over 10,000 felons were released from IDOC without

submitting a DNA sample. In addition, an unknown number of felons were convicted and sentenced to probation in counties across the state before a system was put in place to collect their DNA samples.

“We are proud to work with the Attorney General to make sure that every possible offender is accounted for in the DNA database,” added Greg Sullivan, Executive Director, Illinois Sheriff’s Association. “DNA is obviously an invaluable tool for law enforcement when investigating certain offenses, but it can also be invaluable in the elimination of suspects, ensuring that the only the guilty are punished and justice is served.”

“The goal of the DNA Accountability Project is to assess the size of the gaps in the database, identify the felons that are missing from the database, and establish procedures for collecting these DNA samples,” said Madigan.

Under Attorney General Madigan’s leadership, the Illinois DNA Accountability Project will focus on:

- *Creating a master list of “uncollected” offenders.* By reaching out and working with IDOC and county probation departments throughout the state, the Project will create a comprehensive list of felony offenders whose DNA is missing from the DNA database.
- *Developing a process for locating and taking DNA samples from “uncollected” felons who are currently incarcerated.* The Project will work with county jails and other law enforcement resources to locate uncollected felons within jail populations.
- *Collecting DNA samples from “uncollected” offenders outside the county jails.* The Project will explore methods for obtaining DNA samples from uncollected felons who are not in state or county custody.

“DNA has been a powerful new law enforcement tool that has helped us convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent,” said Cook County State’s Attorney Richard A. Devine. “This project will provide more complete information that we can use to solve new and old cases alike.”

“Police departments across this state grow more dependent each day on DNA evidence to effectively solve crimes,” said Dave Bradford, Chief of the Glen Carbon Police Department and President of the Illinois Association of Chief’s of Police. “We are proud to be a part of this project and look forward to assisting in filling in the missing pieces.”

“The U.S. Marshal’s Fugitive Task Force has a long history of partnering with Attorney General Madigan and law enforcement across Illinois to keep communities safe. We are proud to be a member of the Illinois DNA Accountability Project and look forward to working to ensure Illinois’ DNA database is as complete as the law intended it to be,” said Geoffrey S. Shank, commander, U.S. Marshal’s Fugitive Task Force.”

-30-

[Return to February 2008 Press Releases](#)