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Governor Crist Signs Public Safety Legislation

~ Recognizes 70th anniversary of the Florida Highway Patrol ~

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today signed legislation that strengthens public safety laws for Floridians and the millions of visitors to the state each year. The five bills signed by the Governor during a ceremony held at the headquarters of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles will help ensure justice and protection for victims of crimes, increase penalties for crimes against youth serving as Law Enforcement Explorers, and ultimately increase the safety of the people of Florida.

“Today I am proud to sign legislation that will strengthen Florida’s criminal justice system and make our state a safer place to live and visit,” said Governor Crist. “Nothing is more important to the quality of life of our people than to ensure the safety of our neighborhoods and provide our law enforcement officers the tools they need to continue protecting our people.”

Governor Crist was joined at today’s bill signing by Representative Marty Kiar, Senator Victor Crist, Representative Rachel Burgin, Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio and Electra Bustle, Executive Director of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. The bill signing followed a tour of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles’ headquarters that included visits to the Customer Service Call Center and the Motorist Services Office that provides driver license, identification card, title and registration services to the public.

“We appreciate the confidence placed in our department by the Legislature and the Governor, and as we recognize this milestone, we reflect upon our proud heritage and plan for the future ahead,” said Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles executive director Electra Theodorides-Bustle. “We are fortunate to have great people working together to be a positive influence on highway safety. We are committed to saving lives every day.”

Summaries of the new legislation are as follows:

Senate Bill 1100 – Relating to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

Sponsored by Senator Andy Gardiner and Representative Rachel Burgin

Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles as an agency and the 70th anniversary of the Florida Highway Patrol, Senate Bill 1100 reenacts the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and completes the department’s sunset review process. The bill also requires commercial

drivers to submit to testing when they are believed to be impaired by a controlled substance and establishes penalties for non-compliance.

Senate Bill 1312 – Related to Sexual Battery

Sponsored by Senator Mike Fasano and Representative Yolly Roberson

Senate Bill 1312 ensures that victims of sexual violence are notified of their rights and available crisis services by requiring law enforcement officers to inform them at the time of investigation. This allows law enforcement officers to better serve victims of sexual violence and as a result, victims will be more aware of their rights and improve their access to crisis intervention centers. Currently in Florida, there are 31 rape crisis centers certified by the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence, a statewide nonprofit organization that developed the rape crisis center certification criteria.

Senate Bill 2276 – Relating to the DNA Database

Sponsored by Senator Steve Oelrich and Representative Bill Snyder

Senate Bill 2276, the DNA Database Act, expands DNA sample collection to include persons who are arrested for or charged with a felony. Current Florida law only requires persons convicted of a felony or certain misdemeanors to submit a sample for the database. This bill will significantly expand the size of Florida's current DNA database and assist law enforcement officers in fighting crime.

House Bill 57 – Related to Law Enforcement Explorers

Sponsored by Representative Betty Reed and Senator Tony Hill

House Bill 57 extends the law penalizing criminals who assault law enforcement officers and other first responders to include Law Enforcement Explorers who are accompanying police officers. The Law Enforcement Exploring program allows youth age 14 to 20 to work with a local law enforcement agency and assist sworn officers in patrol operations with relatively minimal risk.

House Bill 115 – Related to Sexual Offenders and Predators

Representative Marty Kiar and Senator Jeremy Ring

House Bill 115 increases registration reporting requirements for sexual predators and offenders to include home and cellular telephone numbers. Florida's sex offender registration requirements will now also include persons convicted of traveling to meet a minor to engage in unlawful sexual behavior. The bill also expands Florida's jurisdiction to prosecute sex offenders who transmit harmful material via computer or electronic devices to minors living outside the state and encourages public libraries to adopt an internet safety education program.

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