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National Center for Victims of Crime, RAINN and Lifetime Television Commend Senate Panel for Approving Critical Rape Prevention DNA Bill

Washington, DC – Today, The National Center for Victims of Crime, The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), and Lifetime Television released the following statement on the Senate Judiciary Committee's approval yesterday of S. 1700, "The Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act."

"Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary Committee passed one of the most important rape prevention bills in history. Enactment of this bill will help law enforcement solve as many as 67,000 open rape and murder cases. By locking up thousands of dangerous criminals, we can prevent many thousands of rapes, murders and other crimes. There is near-unanimous Senate support for eliminating the DNA evidence backlog and solving these cases. We commend Chairman Hatch for his leadership and urge the Senate to make sure this issue does not get lost in an election year or mired in debates about extraneous issues. On this issue, every day that we postpone eliminating the DNA evidence backlog means more rapes and more murders that could have been prevented.

Background:

A recent Department of Justice report found that DNA evidence from 540,000 crime scenes nationwide, including 221,000 open rape and murder cases, is sitting on shelves and in freezers, unanalyzed. All that prevents us from solving many of these crimes and locking up the rapists and murderers is a DNA test. That is why we have been

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working together for more than two years, along with rape survivor Debbie Smith, to raise awareness about this issue and to urge Congress to eliminate the DNA backlog.

The legislation (S. 1700), which the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed last November and which the Senate Judiciary Committee passed today, will provide approximately \$1 billion in funding over five years to eliminate the DNA backlog, significantly improve the collection and processing of DNA evidence, and better train police officers, sexual assault forensic nurses and prosecutors. The end result will be thousands of rapists and other violent criminals behind bars, and thousands of future crimes prevented.

These open cases are not just statistics, they are people's lives. Behind each is at least one victim, people like rape survivor and advocate Debbie Smith. More than 110,000 Lifetime Television viewers have signed an online petition in support of this legislation.

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1.800.656.HOPE. The hotline has helped more than 750,000 victims of sexual assault since 1994. RAINN also carries out extensive education and outreach programs to ensure that more than 100 million Americans each year receive vital information about sexual assault prevention, prosecution and recovery. After researching the nation's 819,000 charities, Worth Magazine selected RAINN as one of "America's 100 Best Charities." Additional information is at www.rainn.org.

The National Center is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for victims of crime. Since its founding in 1985, the National Center has worked with local, state, and federal organizations and agencies across the country, and provided information, support, and assistance to hundreds of thousands of victims, victim service providers, allied professionals, and advocates. The National Center's toll-free helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, offers supportive counseling, practical information about crime and victimization, referrals to local community resources, as well as skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems.

LIFETIME is the leader in women's television and one of the top-rated basic cable television networks. A diverse, multi-media company, LIFETIME is committed to offering the highest quality entertainment and information programming, and advocating a wide range of issues affecting women and their families. Launched in 1984, LIFETIME Television serves over 88 million households nationwide. In 1998, LIFETIME launched Lifetime Movie Network, now in more than 43 million homes, and in 2001, Lifetime Real Women. LIFETIME Television, Lifetime Movie Network, Lifetime Real Women, Lifetime Radio for Women, Lifetime Home Entertainment and Lifetime Online are part of LIFETIME Entertainment Services, a 50/50 joint venture of The Hearst Corporation and The Walt Disney Company.

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