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**COURT RESTRICTS REMOTE ACCESS TO VICTIM & WITNESS INFORMATION**

*March 8, 2006--Centreville, MD.* The Maryland Court of Appeals issued an Order yesterday attempting to finally resolve the issue of public access to victim and witness information in criminal and other similar actions. After more than a year of discussion and debate on the issue, the Court of Appeals adopted an amendment to the Maryland Rules that effectively restricts remote access to a victim or witness's address, telephone number, date of birth, e-mail address, or place of employment in criminal, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and peace order cases. The Amendment effectively balances the Court's interest in providing public access to court records with the State's Attorneys and victim and witness advocates' concern for the safety and privacy of victims and witnesses.

President of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association, Frank Kratovil, Jr., who had advocated for such restrictions on behalf of the Association, advised fellow State's Attorneys of the Order this morning by e-mail and applauded the Court of Appeals for its decision. In response to the Order Kratovil said "The Court has spent considerable time and energy attempting to resolve this issue in a manner that is mutually acceptable to all interested parties. Members of the Court have met with us repeatedly and have understood and considered our concerns and have now adopted a solution that balances the Court's desire to provide for public access with our concerns regarding safety and privacy. Although I do not know the relationship the high courts in other States have with their prosecutors, victim and witness organizations and citizens, our Court should certainly be recognized and congratulated for its openness and willingness to work with us and consider our concerns in rendering its decision on the issue. Substantial recognition should also be given to Sue Schenning, Deputy State's Attorney for Baltimore County; Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. and its Executive Director Russell Butler; the Maryland State Board of Victim Services and its Chairwoman, Roberta Roper; the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and its Executive Director, Michaele Cohen; and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and its Executive Director Jennifer Pollitt Hill; who, along with other advocacy groups and organizations, strongly urged adoption of a rule restricting access to victim and witness information".