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FOR RELEASE:
IMMEDIATE, Tuesday
June 4, 2002

**GOVERNOR HELPS HONOR NEW YORK'S CORRECTION OFFICERS
Participates in Ceremony Honoring DOCS Employees, Fallen Prison Heroes**

Governor George E. Pataki today attended the New York State Department of Corrections' (DOCS) annual ceremony to memorialize DOCS employees who have died in the line of duty, and to present awards to employees for valor and extraordinary service.

"New York State is fortunate to have the finest correction officers in the nation," Governor Pataki said. "With great courage and professionalism, these dedicated individuals place themselves at tremendous risk to protect our local communities, and we have an obligation to ensure that those who have lost their lives in the line of duty are never forgotten.

"I am honored to join with you today as we remember the individuals who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their fellow citizens, and to recognize many of our current DOCS employees who are working hard every day to make New York a better, safer State."

Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno said, "Today we recognize the men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty for the people of New York State. The work done by the officers and employees of the Department of Correctional Services provides us with a sense of security, one that is paramount in today's climate, and we owe them our respect and gratitude."

Two Medals of Honor and two Medals of Merit were presented to Department employees for their outstanding service in 2001. They are:

- Sergeant Jeffrey Haines of Coxsackie Correctional Facility, who received the Medal of Honor for stopping an inmate's vicious assault on another inmate.
- Officer Paul MacNeil of Wende Correctional Facility in Alden, who received the Medal of Honor for coming to the rescue of an Officer who had been knocked unconscious during an attack by an inmate.
- Plant utility engineer Mark Battaglia of Wende, who received the Medal of Merit for coming to the assistance of a LeRoy police officer being assaulted by a motorist he stopped.
- Officer Clinton Stevens of Washington Correctional Facility in Comstock, who received the Medal of Merit for crossing the weakening ice on Lake George to aid in the rescue of a man who had fallen through.

At today's ceremony, Governor Pataki also became the first Governor ever to receive the Department's highest award – the Medal of Honor.

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In presenting the Medal of Honor award to Governor Pataki, DOCS Commissioner Glenn S. Goord said, "You have worked tirelessly to give our staff the tools it needs to make our prisons more secure. You have provided all inmates with expanded programs that contribute to making our prisons safer, while offering nonviolent offenders the opportunity to earn early release. Your support and determination to accomplish these goals have earned you our Medal of Honor."

Senator Dale M. Volker, Chairman of the Committee on Criminal and Civil Codes said, "There is a reason why New York ranks as one of the safest states in the entire country, and that reason is Governor Pataki's effective long-term strategies in reducing illegal behavior in our communities, especially violent criminal behavior. The Governor has invested in our State corrections personnel, stiffened penalties for violent criminal behavior, made enormous progress in ensuring that victims are given compensation and recourse; while at the same time maintaining and protecting the rights of those accused of illegal offenses."

Senator Michael F. Nozzolio, Chairman of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee said, "Governor Pataki has been a leader in making the workplace safer for correction officers, right-sizing our prison system, and enhancing public safety. As a result of his leadership, assaults on correctional staff are at the lowest level in 20 years, crime has been reduced dramatically, and our correctional facilities are safer than ever."

In his remarks today, Governor Pataki spoke directly to family members of those who were slain in the retaking of the Attica prison after the 1971 riot, as well as to several former hostages who were also present. In March 2001, the Governor named Commissioner Goord to chair the Attica Task Force to examine the issues and concerns of these individuals and their families. Deputy Speaker Arthur O. Eve and Senator Volker also serve on the bi-partisan joint task force.

The Governor also proclaimed June 2-8, 2002, as Correctional Services Employee Week. Today's ceremony took place at the permanent memorial park dedicated in 2000 on the 50-acre DOCS Albany Training Academy campus. The centerpiece of the memorial in front of the Academy is an Empire blue granite memorial that stands 12 feet high, six feet wide, 18 inches deep and weighs 10 tons. It includes an inscription that reads:

"In honor of the brave men and women of the Department of Correctional Services who gave their lives in the performance of their duties on behalf of all the people of the State of New York."

No names are inscribed on the memorial. Instead, each honoree's name, identifying details and cause of death are inscribed on a plaque displayed in the memorial room of the Academy. The first honoree was killed by an inmate in 1861. The honor roll includes 25 uniformed employees and eight civilians among the 33 who have died in the line of duty as a result of inmate actions. With today's presentations, the Department has awarded 41 Medals of Honor and 77 of Merit.

According to Commissioner Goord, overcrowding has been reduced in medium-security prisons through the Governor's alternatives that have, since 1995, allowed more than 44,000 selected, nonviolent offenders to earn release prior to completing their court-set minimum sentences. The Commissioner also noted; the Governor's contributions to the lowest rates of inmate-on-staff and inmate-on-inmate assaults in 20 years; his approval of a law criminalizing the inmate throwing of bodily waste; and his support for improved inmate HIV and TB treatment regimens that reduce the possibility of transmission to staff. In addition, the death penalty bill signed into law by the Governor also applies to inmates who kill prison staff.

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