



NEWS RELEASE

ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY MCMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Contact: Trey Walker
803-734-4091
twalker@ag.state.sc.us

Crimestoppers Tipster Identities Protected By Law

New Law Aims to Increase Public Involvement With Unsolved Crimes

Columbia, S.C. – Revealing the identities of citizens who anonymously provide information on unsolved crimes to Crimestoppers is now a serious crime thanks to a new law proposed by South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster, House Judiciary Chairman Jim Harrison and Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott. The Crimestoppers bill, which was approved by the General Assembly this session, became law without the governor's signature on June 14, 2006.

The new law is designed to increase the number of tips and information on unsolved crimes provided to local Crimestoppers organizations by the public.

Crimestoppers is a volunteer collaboration between local, state and federal law enforcement, community leaders and the media that provides an outlet through which anonymous callers or tipsters can provide information about unsolved crimes. Callers who telephone the 24-hour hotline are immediately given a code number. If their tip results in an arrest, the caller is eligible for a cash reward.

The intentional release of confidential tipster information is now a misdemeanor offense, punishable by up to one (1) year in jail and a \$1,000 fine or both. When done for monetary or financial gain, the intentional release will result in a felony offense and up to five (5) years in jail.

The new law also establishes a statewide Crimestoppers Council to coordinate, support and oversee efforts between local chapters and allow for drug forfeiture monies and court ordered reimbursements to help fund Crimestoppers tipster rewards. Also, Crimestoppers officials and volunteers now receive immunity from civil liability for the unintentional or accidental release of tipster identities or information.

“Our law enforcement officers in this state are outstanding and do a great job. But there will never be enough money and resources for government to do it all,” said Attorney General Henry McMaster. “That’s why if citizens see a crime or something suspicious they must get involved, call it in, and have confidence that their names and tips will be kept confidential by law.”



“This new law gives our local Crimestoppers organizations the support and resources they need to continue providing law enforcement with valuable information to catch criminals,” said House Judiciary Chairman Jim Harrison, the bill’s primary sponsor in the House.

"Crimestoppers plays a significant role in bringing criminals to justice," said Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott. "Crimestoppers gives law enforcement one more tool in giving closure to victims and the communities affected by crime. Support on the state level is critical to the continued success of Crimestoppers in South Carolina."

There are sixteen active Crimestoppers organizations in the state that would come under the proposed South Carolina Crimestoppers Council.

Midlands Area: (Newberry, Saluda, Lexington, Fairfield, Richland, Kershaw, Calhoun Counties, Manning PD and Aiken County)

Pee Dee Area (Florence, Marion, Dillon, Marlboro, Chesterfield, Darlington, Williamsburg Counties)

Greenville County

Horry County

York County

Low Country Area (Charleston, Berkeley, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown Counties)

Anderson County

Pickens County

Jasper County

Hartsville City

Orangeburg County

Sumter Area (Lee, Sumter and Clarendon Counties)

Oconee County

Spartanburg County

Union County

Beaufort County

View the new law at: http://www.scstatehouse.net/sess116_2005-2006/bills/4456.htm

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