



Probation Association of New Jersey

Serving New Jersey Since 1904

An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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PROBATION ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY OUTRAGED BY POLICE OFFICERS DEATH BY PROBATIONER

The Probation Association of New Jersey (PANJ) is saddened by the murder of Newark Detective Michael Morgan Jr. of the Newark Police Department and offer its heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones.

We are pleased that Jerome Wright, 24, and his 19-year-old girlfriend, Nashali Gadson, were arrested Wednesday morning and now face felony murder and robbery charges in the murder of Detective Michael Morgan.

Mr. Wright was on probation in Essex County and then transferred to Passaic County where he lived. He failed to appear in court for receiving stolen property and a warrant was issued for his arrest on June 10, 2011, thus becoming an absconder. His original crime of receiving stolen property would not necessarily put him in a high risk probation caseload; however, this alleged murder of a police officer starkly depicts the dangers of criminals on probation when they are confronted by police officers or civilians.

“This is the 8th police officer murdered by a person serving a probation term, which is completely unacceptable,” said George Christie, President of the Probation Association of New Jersey. “Many of our probationers are dangerous criminals, despite their non-violent prior convictions.”

“Improving the community supervision system in the State of New Jersey is our top priority,” said PANJ Vice President Dwight Covaleskie. “That is why we are pushing for the support of ACR55/SCR37 in the New Jersey Legislature, which would authorize a ballot question asking voters to allow for the transfer of probation functions to the State Parole Board. Transferring probation services to the Executive Branch would give law enforcement leaders greater oversight of the safety protocols and procedures affecting probation officers and probationers.”

President Christie added, “We know that we have a long road ahead of us to convince the public that this is the right thing to do, but our ultimate goal is to ensure that those

very same members of the public are protected from offenders in the community supervision system.”

The modern community supervision system was created in the United States in 1841. Today, there are an estimated 130,000 adults and 15,000 juveniles in New Jersey’s probation system. Nationwide, there are an estimated 5 million offenders under the supervision of parole or probation.

PANJ represents an estimated 2,800 probation officers and supervisors employed by the Judiciary through two collective bargaining units that include other professional personnel.

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