



For immediate release
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Governor Bill Richardson Signs Executive Agreement that Helps Resolve Oregon Murder Case

Deal on Joel Patrick Courtney Case Leads to Discovery of Murder Victim's Remains

SANTA FE – An agreement between Governor Bill Richardson and Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski has helped resolve a long-standing murder case, which culminated in the discovery of the remains of the victim who was murdered in 2004 by Joel Patrick Courtney.

Governor Richardson agreed on Friday to the Executive Agreement with Governor Kulongoski. The agreement, which was negotiated by the Benton County District Attorney and had the support of the family of the murder victim, allowed for Courtney to plead guilty to aggravated murder and disclose information that would lead authorities to the remains of the victim, Brooke Wilberger. The remains were located and positively identified over the weekend.

In exchange for the guilty plea and the information about the remains, Governor Richardson agreed to allow Courtney's return to New Mexico to serve the remainder of his 18-year prison sentence for an unrelated kidnapping and rape of a University of New Mexico student in 2004. Following the New Mexico sentence, Courtney will return to Oregon to serve his sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

"I'm happy that I could accommodate the wishes of the victim's family," Governor Richardson said. "I hope they can find some closure after all this time."

Courtney pled guilty in 2007 to the kidnapping and rape of a UNM student. In 2008, Governor Richardson signed an extradition agreement with Governor Kulongoski that allowed Courtney to face charges in Oregon for the murder of Wilberger.

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