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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Charles Chatman is Dallas County's 15th Wrongfully-Convicted Citizen

After almost 27 years in prison, DNA results prove him innocent of 1981 sexual assault

WHAT: Hearing to announce finding on post-conviction DNA testing results of Charles Chatman

WHEN: Thursday, January 3, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. CST

WHERE: Criminal District Court #4 (Judge John Creuzot presiding)
Frank Crowley Courts Building, 6th Floor
133 N. Industrial Blvd.
Dallas, Texas 75207

BACKGROUND: Charles Chatman was convicted by a jury in 1981 for aggravated sexual assault and sentenced to 99 years in prison. In this case the perpetrator broke into the victim's home and sexually assaulted her. Mr. Chatman, who is represented by the Innocence Project of Texas, testified at his own trial in 1981 and has maintained his innocence for nearly 27 years.

He requested post-conviction DNA testing in 2001 and was eventually granted testing but the Department of Public Safety (DPS) lab could not get a result. In 2004, Mr. Chatman made a decision not to conduct further testing on the biological sample at issue because it would use up the remaining sample and quite possibly yield either no result or an inconclusive result. He chose to wait until technology had improved to produce a more definite result. Judge Creuzot ordered Southwest Institute of Forensic Sciences (SWIFS) to hold on to and preserve the biological sample.

In January 2007, with the agreement of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office, Judge Creuzot ordered YSTR testing at Orchid Cellmark Private Lab. Mr. Chatman was bench warranted to Dallas County's Lew Sterrett Justice Center, where he had been waiting for the results of his test. The written results were received from Orchid Cellmark yesterday, January 2, 2008, and excluded him as the perpetrator.

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Charles Chatman 15th Wrongfully-Convicted
page two

To date, Mr. Chatman is the second person to be cleared of a crime by post-conviction DNA evidence based on testing initiated after District Attorney Craig Watkins took office one year ago. Overall, Chatman is the 15th wrongfully-convicted citizen in Dallas County. He has also served the longest amount of time in prison — almost 27 years — thus far, of those who have been exonerated for crimes they did not commit.

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