

# Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey

## State of Tennessee



### News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 23, 2009

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## Lt. Governor Ramsey receives national award for DNA database law

### *John Walsh presents award for Johnia Berry Act*

(Nashville, TN) - **Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey (R-Blountville)** has been honored by DNA Saves, an organization devoted to increasing the use of DNA samples to fight crime. John Walsh, host of "America's Most Wanted" and co-founder of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, presented the award to Lt. Governor Ramsey for the Johnia Berry Act of 2007, which requires all individuals arrested for violent felonies to provide a DNA sample to the TBI. The law is named for a Johnson City native and ETSU graduate murdered in Knoxville.

"Tennessee was one of the first states to recognize DNA as a powerful crime fighting tool," said Lt. Governor Ramsey. "We have already solved many 'cold case' crimes as well as current criminal investigations. DNA also the ability to set free the innocent."

The award was presented at the annual "Katie's Heroes" event. The award is named for Katie Sepich, a New Mexico State University student whose killer committed multiple crimes after Katie's murder but before New Mexico established a DNA database.

Prior to the Johnia Berry Act, Tennessee law required a person to provide a DNA sample only after they have been convicted and sentenced for certain violent felonies. As a result, members of law enforcement felt that Tennessee did not have enough DNA samples in their data bank. In 2006, Lt. Governor Ramsey worked to get more funding and staffing to eliminate the DNA backlog and prepare the data bank program for a vast expansion.

Johnia Berry was an ETSU graduate who moved to Knoxville to enroll at UT to work on a Master's Degree. On December 6, 2004, someone entered her apartment and brutally murdered her. The killer was arrested three years later when DNA left during a later crime matched that found at the scene of the Berry murder.

On the web:

<http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/senate/speaker.html>

<http://www.johniberry.org/>

<http://www.dnasaves.org/>

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