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Victim Impact Unit
 Division of Parole
 97 Central Avenue
 Albany, NY 12206
 Re: Sergio Voiì #82A0661

Pictured at the remembrance ceremony for slain Detectives John P. Finnegan and Luke J. Fallon, from left, 70 Squad Commander Lt. Christopher Minogue, Finnegan's granddaughter Jennifer Curtis (daughter of Maureen Finnegan Curtis), granddaughters Catherine and Victoria Finnegan, their father John F. Finnegan and his wife Teresa, Sgt. Charles Giglio, 70 Precinct Commanding Officer Deputy Inspector Eric Rodriguez, Patrol Borough Brooklyn South Executive Officer Deputy Chief John Essig, and 70 Precinct Executive Officer Capt. Matthew Harrington. Photos courtesy of Hillel Engel.

Dear Commissioners:

I write to add my voice to those who vigorously oppose the release of cop-killer Sergio Voiì. I, better than most, know how the possibility of Voiì's release affects Police Officer Michael Russell's family. My father, Det. John P. Finnegan, NYPD, was shot and killed in the line of duty on May 18, 1962 and, for years, I had to grapple with the abhorrent prospect that his killer, Jerome Rosenberg, might be released from jail. When, in June 2009, I learned that Rosenberg had died in jail, I was overcome with a profound sense of relief and well-being, a feeling I cannot capture in words. My fervent hope is that one day Officer Russell's widow and his two children will experience the same feeling.

Unfortunately, my mother did not get to experience it. The stress of having lost my father (the love of my mother's life and the center of her universe), the stress of raising two children (then aged one and four) by herself and, to add insult to injury, the stress of having to wonder every two years (starting in 1979) whether Rosenberg would remain in jail – where he unquestionably belonged – all contributed to shortening her life appreciably.

The Parole Board should do all it can to mitigate the stress Mrs. Grace Russell and her children are currently experiencing. She and her children, as well as Officer Russell, made a sacrifice for each of you and for every other citizen in the State of New York that none of us, nor the State itself, can ever repay. You and



May 18, 2012 marked the 50th remembrance of the murder of NYPD Detectives John P. Finnegan and Luke J. Fallon, who were killed in 1962 while on patrol in Brooklyn's Boro Park section. The two 70 Squad Detectives responded to a store robbery in progress and when they arrived at the scene they were met by a barrage of gunfire. Within five days, two perpetrators and three accomplices were in custody.

Det. Finnegan's son John F. Finnegan recently sent this letter to the New York State Division of Parole objecting to the release of an unrelated cop killer named Sergio Voii, who murdered PO Michael Russell in 1979. Finnegan's unique understanding of what it means to be a member of a line-of-duty family prompted The Gold Shield to reprint his touching words.

ears Never Forgotten

I, and everyone else in our great State, owe Mrs. Russell, her children and Officer Russell's memory our understanding, our compassion and, as importantly, our undivided and unwavering loyalty. We — you, I and all others in the State — should commit ourselves to ensuring that we do nothing that would upset or hurt Mrs. Russell or her children. Her husband, their father, regularly put himself in harm's way to protect all of us, you included, from evil, Voii merely being the last miscreant Officer Russell encountered. You now have the opportunity to protect his family; please do not disappoint them.

As I write this letter, I am in tears, both because my loss is again in the forefront of my mind and because my heart goes out to Mrs. Russell and her family. If any of you, even for a moment, ever wonder whether a cop killer's depraved act ceases to have an impact, let me assure you that the answer is no. The repercussions, as I have learned, affect the next generation as well. The toll on my younger daughter is as pronounced, if not more pronounced, as my father's death had on me. She periodically visits the NYPD Angels webpage dedicated to my father's memory and, occasionally, she leaves a comment on his wall. She recently wrote:

"... every time I click this page I cry, but all of your comments [referring to the many messages left by others] ... even though I've already read them billions of times ... cheer me up and then I start crying happy tears ... please continue to comment and please leave some stories ... after reading your comments and stories, I feel closer to [my grandfather], though I am unable to actually meet him."

The impact of my father's death remains incalculable and immeasurable, affecting countless lives, some of whom were not born at the time of his death. The same is true with respect to Officer Russell's death. I know this to be the case because a newspaper article reprinted a passage that Officer Russell's son, Donald, had written in his Victim's Impact Statement. Donald Russell lamented that he had no memories of his father and could not recall the sound of his father's voice. The article also contained remarks from Officer Russell's daughter, Jessica. She spoke of the pall that her father's absence cast on many joyous celebrations, including her birthdays, her graduations from grade school, high school, college and graduate school and her wedding. Her father was not there to share in the excitement of her first job offer or the birth of her children. She was disheartened (understandably and naturally) that her "children would never meet their grandfather." These comments resonated with me as they could just as easily have been spoken by my sister or me.

I realize that convicts have rights. I will not ask you to disregard or to trivialize Voii's entitlement to a hearing. Rather, I would remind you that the law requires the Parole Board to consider the heinous nature of Voii's crime and the impact his cowardly actions have had, both on Officer Russell's family in particular and, more generally, on society as a whole. I implore you not to trivialize these considerations during your deliberations.

As you must realize, the murder of a police officer transcends, in relative terms, the killing of most individuals. The act of murdering a police officer in cold blood — as Voii did — is an affront to, and an assault on, society. It tears at our very fabric.

I (and, perhaps, you as well) often take for granted the comfort and security I feel while commuting to work, while taking a stroll or when sitting in my kitchen having a cup of coffee. I rarely stop to think that the reason why I feel safe

50 Years but Never Forgotten

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and secure in my daily activities is because men and women like Officer Russell have dedicated themselves to protecting me and the society in which I live. For this reason alone, we should treat as exponentially more reprehensible crimes which are directed at those who seek to uphold order and to prevent lawless behavior. Common sense, as well as each of our own self-interests, dictates so.

Likewise, our State legislature has made it crystal clear that crimes committed against those who serve the public should be punished more severely than other offenses. I see a reminder of this principle every time I take a New York City subway. There is a warning sign affixed to each car advising the riding public that an assault on a member of a train crew is a felony which is subject to a longer (and thus harsher) jail term than an assault on a fellow passenger. A society that seeks to protect its subway motormen and conductors most assuredly wants to protect its police officers as well and, if asked, would insist that your Board express revulsion for cop-killers and factor disdain for cop-killers into its decisions.

There is also a very pragmatic reason why our collective, societal interest would be advanced appreciably by keeping Voii incarcerated for the remainder of his life. Officer Russell distinguished himself by acting with bravery, selfless valor and courage. There is a risk, if the Parole Board were to release Voii (or other cop-killers), that some police officers might feel betrayed and unappreciated and might hesitate (albeit unconsciously or unwittingly) to act in the same heroic fashion as Officer Russell did. Society is better served by assuring our police officers that their sacrifices will never be forgotten nor denigrated, thereby encouraging them to remain willing to go beyond — in Officer Russell's case, well beyond — the call of duty.

Through this point, I have been silent about Voii's senseless killing of Edward Brugman, a second victim of Voii's unmitigated arrogance. I do not intend by my silence to be disrespectful to Mr. Brugman or his family. Nor do I intend to belittle the tragedy that befell them. Mr. Brugman's murder underscores why it is essential that we have police officers — to protect us against ruthless thugs and cretins — and why society must hold those who murder our heroes more accountable (and require those murderers to serve materially longer sentences).

In sum, I respectfully ask you to deny Voii's request for release. I also ask that you do so each and every time he might appear before you in the future.

*Sincerely,
John F. Finnegan*

P.O. Michael Russell was 30 years old when he had his fatal encounter with Sergio Voii, a teenage thug who minutes earlier had interrupted a community ballgame between area residents and cops from the 75th Precinct on August 2, 1979. Voii shot and killed businessman Edward Brugman on the field, then fled. Off-duty and unarmed, Russell and others chased the perp for blocks, cornering him in a backyard. Voii shot and killed Russell and was sentenced to a minimum of 32 years. He is currently housed at Fishkill Correctional Facility and, like other inmates whose minimum time is served, he is now eligible for parole every two years. His next parole hearing date is March 2013.

In 2009, when cop killer Jerry Rosenberg died in jail at age 72, Joan Scheibner, daughter of slain Det. Luke Fallon, told the New York Daily News that her mother Margaret moved out of New York in 1965 because she did not want her tax dollars to house, clothe, and feed the man who murdered her husband.

