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**BROOKLYN MAN CHARGED WITH VEHICULAR MANSLAUGHTER
AND DWI IN FATAL HIGHWAY CRASH**
22-Year-Old Female Passenger Killed

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a 25-year-old Brooklyn motorist who had allegedly been speeding along the Belt Parkway has been charged with vehicular manslaughter and driving under the influence of alcohol after colliding with a tree and killing his girlfriend who had been a passenger in the front seat.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendant is accused of getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol and being involved in a traffic accident in which his girlfriend of three years was killed. By his alleged actions, the defendant displayed a wanton and reckless disregard for life that clearly illustrated the lethal consequences resulting from driving while intoxicated. People should remember that a car is a weapon and, like a gun, it can kill – unless it is in responsible hands.”

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Waldo J. Vargas, 25, of 518 Pennsylvania Avenue in Brooklyn. The defendant was arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge William Harrington on a three-count complaint charging him with second-degree vehicular manslaughter (Vasean’s Law), criminally negligent homicide and operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The defendant, who faces up to seven years in prison if convicted, was ordered held on \$30,000 bail and to return to court on August 26, 2008.

The District Attorney said that the criminal complaint alleges that on Monday, August 11, 2008, at about 12:55 a.m., the defendant was driving a 1999 Honda Civic well in excess of the posted fifty miles per hour speed limit when he lost control of the vehicle at the intersection of the Belt Parkway and Springfield Boulevard and struck a tree. Elvia Collado, 22, of Jackson Heights, Queens, who was a passenger in the front seat, died of injuries sustained in the crash. It is alleged that the defendant was observed to have an odor of alcohol on his breath and admitted to police that he had been drinking beer prior to the crash.

District Attorney Brown said that the defendant was arrested by police officers assigned to the New York City Police Department’s Highway District 3.

Assistant District Attorney Catherine L. O’Connell, of the District Attorney’s Homicide Investigations Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Peter T. Reese, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Deputy Bureau Chief, and Richard B. Schaeffer, Supervisor, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.