

Murphy Introduces Billy's Law to Help Families Find Missing Loved Ones

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HARTFORD - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) was joined by family members of missing persons from Connecticut and local law enforcement officials to announce that he is introducing federal legislation to help families find missing loved ones.

"Nobody should have to go through what the Smolinskis have gone through. Billy's Law will give more tools to families who are going through the heart wrenching experience of learning their loved one has gone missing. The systems we have in place now for law enforcement and medical examiners to use to help families find their loved ones don't talk to each other. That's inexcusable, and so the bill I am introducing fixes that problem, once and for all," said Murphy.

Murphy's legislation is named after Billy Smolinski of Waterbury, who went missing on August 24, 2004 at the age of 31. Billy's family has experienced many obstacles in searching for their missing son, including the fact that federal law mandates law enforcement report missing children, but not adults or unidentified bodies. While law enforcement can voluntarily report this information, a lack of resources and knowledge of the system often prevents them from doing so.

"The notion that we are living in a CSI society is nothing more than a television fantasy. My son Billy vanished five years ago, and in our efforts to find him we opened a Pandora's Box of problems plaguing the world of the missing and the unidentified dead. Just about anything that could go wrong in the effort to find our son went wrong. Law enforcement training has to catch up with science and technology and Congressman Murphy's act will ensure that it does," said Janice Smolinski, Billy's mother.

Every year tens of thousands of Americans go missing, never to be seen by their loved ones again. At the same time, there are also an estimated 40,000 sets of unidentified human remains that are being held or disposed of across the country, and no organized system to match cases and remains. Murphy's "Help Find the Missing Act" (Billy's Law) is an effort to fix the enormous gaps in the nation's missing persons systems and bring closure to the loved ones of the missing, while providing law enforcement, coroners and medical examiners the resources and guidance to do the reporting.

Billy's Law empowers families and loved ones of the missing to find justice by helping to secure funding for the only federal missing persons and unidentified remains database that can be cross-searched, accessed and added to by the public - the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). This database enables the loved ones of the missing to spend countless hours searching for a match and add invaluable information to the case profile that only they know.

The legislation helps to streamline the reporting process for law enforcement and medical examiners by connecting two major federal missing persons and unidentified remains databases- the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the NamUs. Connecting these databases makes them more comprehensive and more likely to lead to a missing person or unidentified remains match.

Billy's Law builds upon Connecticut's 2007 Law Enforcement and Missing Persons law as it calls for the issuance of broad recommendations for standards and procedures for law enforcement to follow in dealing with missing persons and unidentified remains

Rep. Vickie Nardello, who represents the 89th District which includes Bethany, Cheshire and Prospect, said: "I applaud Rep. Murphy's efforts to pass federal legislation to adopt uniformed procedures on how we handle missing persons. A national policy will be the culmination of Jan Smolinski's dreams and hard work. During the upcoming Connecticut legislative session we will continue to pursue additional reform of missing person procedures. With the help of law enforcement agencies we expect passage of this legislation in Connecticut."

Senator Joan V. Hartley, 15th Senatorial District said: "I first of all want to commend Congressman Murphy on the 'Help Find the Missing Act (Billy's Law)' initiative which is sorely needed not only in the 5th Congressional district but throughout the State of Connecticut as well as the United States. In this age of high speed data access and information, we should at the very least, be able to ensure that citizens and their families, especially in times of crisis, are provided every access to information in seeking to identify the whereabouts of the persons that they seek."

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