

## Murphy, Cheshire Resident Janice Smolinski Testify in Washington on "Billy's Law"

Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) and Janice Smolinski, mother of Billy Smolinski, who went missing in Waterbury on August 24, 2004 at the age of 31, testified in Washington at a Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hearing about "Billy's Law."

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) and Janice Smolinski, mother of Billy Smolinski, who went missing in Waterbury on August 24, 2004 at the age of 31, testified in Washington at a Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hearing about "Billy's Law." Murphy introduced this federal legislation, named after Billy Smolinski, along with Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) to help families find missing loved ones.

"Law enforcement can't match the passion and information that family members possess when it comes to searching for a missing person. By building a powerful public database of missing persons and unidentified remains, 'Billy's Law' gives families the tools they need to get closure on their personal nightmares," said Murphy.

"Uncertainty is a cancer that crushes the spirit of loved ones left behind. With this bill, we have an opportunity to make changes nationwide and gives families like mine hope for a better, more certain tomorrow," said Smolinski.

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. Billy's family has experienced many obstacles in searching for their missing son, including disconnected federal databases and a systematic reluctance to prioritize missing adult cases.

"I would like to thank my colleague, Congressman Murphy for taking up this worthy cause, and for asking me to work with him on this important, common sense legislation. Also, I would like to thank Janice Smolinski for sharing with us the story of her son Billy. This legislation is named after her son, but it is aimed to help the all those families like the Smolinskis. Having served as a chief felony prosecutor and judge in Harris County, Texas for 30 years, I know firsthand the hurdles law enforcement and families have to deal with in trying to solve these cases. Many of these problems could easily be addressed by creating a publically accessible national database provided for in "Billy's Law," said Poe.

"Billy's Law," introduced by Murphy and Poe last year, 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 also creates an incentive grants program to coroners, medical examiners, and law enforcement agencies to help facilitate the reporting of missing persons and unidentified remains to the federal databases. Grants can also be used for training programs on how to correctly use the databases and best handle these cases.

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

"The Smolinskis story is tragic, but this family's pursuit of justice, and desire to change the system for the better, is nothing less than heroic. I thank Jan for her courage to fight the system and change it for others across the nation," said Murphy.

Kristina Rose, Acting Director, National Institute of Justice at the U.S. Department of Justice, and Stephen Morris, Deputy Assistant Director, Criminal Justice Information Services, U.S. Department of Justice also testified at the hearing in support of the legislation.

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