

Murphy's "Billy's Law" Moves Step Closer to Reality with Judiciary Committee Approval

Today, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved legislation introduced by Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) and Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX), H.R. 3695, the Help Find the Missing Act, also known as "Billy's Law."

January 27, 2010

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved legislation introduced by Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) and Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX), H.R. 3695, the Help Find the Missing Act, also known as "Billy's Law." After holding a hearing last week on the missing persons legislation, House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI) cosponsored the bill and the Committee moved quickly to push "Billy's Law" forward, one step closer to a vote by the full House.

"I'm thrilled to see this bill gaining steam in Congress," Murphy said. "For families like the Smolinskis across the country whose loved ones have gone missing, the search for answers can be all-consuming. I hope that this bill will help provide closure for some of these families, and keep them from encountering unnecessary roadblocks in their searches."

After hearing from Janice Smolinski of Cheshire about the nightmare her family endured after their 31-year-old son, Billy, went missing from Waterbury in 2004, Murphy penned "Billy's Law" to help ensure that more families do not encounter the systemic challenges the Smolinskis faced in the search to find their son.

"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 match between a missing person and unidentified human remains.

"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 moved one step closer to becoming law today," said Poe. "I want to thank Congressman Murphy for taking on this issue and the Smolinski family for not giving up on making a difference in the lives of thousands of other families struggling to find their loved ones. I am committed to seeing that this bill gains the full support of Congress and to the President's desk as quickly as possible."

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 next step in the legislative process for Billy's law is a full vote in the House. A companion bill is expected to be introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (ID-CT).

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