

Murphy's "Billy's Law" Wins House Approval

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Within weeks of a hearing and a committee vote, today the U.S. House of Representatives 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."

"For all the attention in the news on the things Republicans and Democrats disagree on, this legislation, 'Billy's Law', is an example of how both parties can work together to make this government better and more compassionate," said Murphy.

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 trying to help law enforcement search for 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.

"I want to thank Congressman Murphy and my colleagues for passing this important bill. 'Billy's Law' will help bridge the gap of communication and offer the long overdue resources for families of the missing. It was the unwavering determination of the families, like the Smolinskis, that endured the hardships of a broken system to which we also owe our thanks. Because they never gave up, 'Billy's Law' is now one step closer to becoming a reality," said Poe.

"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.

"By creating a robust, user-friendly national missing persons and unidentified remains database, 'Billy's Law' will help heal family wounds - by finally giving parents and family members like the Smolinskis the ability to be true partners with law enforcement in the search for their loved one," said Murphy.

Watch Chris' floor speech.

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