

Help Find the Missing Act (Billy's Law)

Why the *Help Find the Missing Act* is Needed

Each year, tens of thousands of Americans go missing. Many will never be seen by their loved ones again. At the same time, there are an estimated 40,000 sets of unidentified human remains across the country that are either held at coroners' offices or disposed of after going unclaimed. Sadly, because of gaps in our missing persons databases, these missing persons and unidentified remains are rarely matched. The Help Find the Missing Act will help solve these cases and bring closure to the loved ones of the missing by fixing these gaps.

This legislation is named after Billy Smolinski of Waterbury, Connecticut who went missing on August 24, 2004 at the age of 31. In their frustrated attempts to find him, Billy's family, like countless other families, learned that – unlike with missing children – federal law does not mandate that law enforcement report missing adults or unidentified bodies. Compounding this problem, local law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, and coroners often don't have the resources or training to voluntarily report these cases. Finally, even when missing adults and bodily remains are reported, the wide range of separate and uncoordinated federal, state, local, and non-profit databases makes it extremely difficult to match the missing with human remains.

How this Legislation will Remedy the Problem

The *Help Find the Missing Act* addresses these issues by:

- Authorizing and ensuring funding for the National Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), created in 2007 by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide a missing persons/unidentified database to which the public can contribute and access;
- Connecting NamUs with the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) in order to create more comprehensive missing persons and unidentified remains databases and streamlining the reporting process for local law enforcement;
- Expanding current law by requiring missing children be reported to NamUs (they already must be reported to NCIC);
- Creating an incentive grants program to help states, local law enforcement, medical examiners, and coroners report missing persons and unidentified remains to NCIC and NamUs;
- Requiring DOJ to issue guidelines and best practices on handling missing persons and unidentified remains cases in order to empower law enforcement, medical examiners and coroners to help find the missing.