

SB

247

SFIN

FILE

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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SENATOR LYDA GREEN SENATE DISTRICT G

SB 247 Sponsor Statement

On October 30, 2004, President Bush signed into law the "Justice for All Act of 2004," which established enforceable rights for victims of crimes, enhances DNA collection and analysis efforts, and provides for postconviction DNA testing. As a result of this law, the President's DNA Initiative was launched by the U.S. Department of Justice to help Federal, State and local governments improve their laws to solve more crimes, protect the innocent and identify missing persons. In August 2005, the Department of Justice published "Identifying the Missing: Model State Legislation." Based on this model legislation, I have introduced SB 247.

Every year, numerous Alaskan families go through the agonizing process of reporting missing persons to law enforcement so they can begin the process of finding their loved ones. I believe it is a worthwhile effort to do anything we can to improve that process and increase the success rate of finding missing persons. I am very proud of our law enforcement community in Alaska. It is my intent through the introduction of this bill to help improve their ability to locate and safely return missing persons. This legislation provides the framework necessary for that improvement.

Specifically, SB 247:

- Prohibits the disposal of unidentified human remains unless DNA samples are archived.
- Prohibits a law enforcement agency from refusing to accept a missing persons report.
- Provides a detailed list of specific information to be gathered and recorded by law enforcement about a missing person.
- Allows law enforcement to obtain a DNA sample from the family of a missing person who has been missing for more than 30 days and forward that DNA to an approved facility for analysis and dissemination to missing persons databases.

- Requires all missing person reports to be entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File, the Unidentified Person File, and the state crime information system.
- Provides a mechanism for law enforcement to determine if a missing person is deemed "high-risk" and if so, take immediate action.
- Improves procedures for handling human remains and communicating with the family of a missing person.

This legislation will give more hope to all the families of the missing and also keeps families actively engaged in helping to bring home their missing loved ones. I encourage your support for this important step forward to help law enforcement find missing persons as quickly as possible.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 3
Bill Version: CSSB 247(JUD)
(S) Publish Date: 2/13/08

Identifier (file name): SB247-DOC-OC-01-28-08 Dept. Affected: Corrections
Title: "Act relating to missing persons and unidentified remains.." RDU: Administration and Operations
Component: Office of the Commissioner
Sponsor: Senator Green
Requester: Senate Judiciary Component Number: 694

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

| | Appropriation Required | Information | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Services | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Travel | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Contractual | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Supplies | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Equipment | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Land & Structures | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Grants & Claims | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Miscellaneous | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

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| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
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| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | | | | | | | | |
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

| | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1002 Federal Receipts | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 1003 GF Match | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 1004 GF | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Other Interagency Receipts | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| TOTAL | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Estimate of any current year (FY2008) cost: 0.0

POSITIONS

| | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Full-time | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Part-time | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Temporary | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Passage of this legislation should have no fiscal impact on the Department of Corrections.

Prepared by: Sharleen Griffin, Director
Division: Administrative Services
Approved by: Dwayne Peoples, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Corrections

Phone (907) 465-3339
Date/Time: 1/25/08 12:46 PM
Date: 1/25/2008

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 2
Bill Version: CSSB 247(JUD)
(S) Publish Date: 2/13/08

Identifier (file name): SB247-DPS-R&I-01-28-08 Dept. Affected: Public Safety
Title: "An Act relating to missing persons and unidentified human remains." RDU: Statewide Support
Sponsor: Senator Green Component: Records & Identification
Requester: Senate Judiciary Committee Component Number: 1190

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

| | Appropriation Required | Information | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Services | | | | | | | | |
| Travel | | | | | | | | |
| Contractual | 186.0 | | | | | | | |
| Supplies | | | | | | | | |
| Equipment | | | | | | | | |
| Land & Structures | | | | | | | | |
| Grants & Claims | | | | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 186.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

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| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
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| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

| | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1002 Federal Receipts | | | | | | | |
| 1003 GF Match | | | | | | | |
| 1004 GF | 186.0 | | | | | | |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts | | | | | | | |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health | | | | | | | |
| Other Interagency Receipts | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 186.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Estimate of any current year (FY2008) cost: _____

POSITIONS

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time | | | | | | | |
| Part-time | | | | | | | |
| Temporary | | | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This legislation requires law enforcement agencies, in accepting a report of a missing person, to gather specific information relating to the disappearance of the missing person and requires all missing person reports accepted by a law enforcement agency to be immediately entered into national and state missing person databases.

Modifications to the Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) - the state's crime information system - as well as the department's current missing person clearinghouse database will be required as a result of this legislation. Development of standardized forms and training for law enforcement agencies will also be required. (Continued)

Prepared by: David Schade, Director
Division: Statewide Services
Approved by: Walt Monegan, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety

Phone 269-0202
Date/Time 1/28/08 12:46 PM
Date 1/28/2008

FISCAL NOTE # 2

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSSB 247(JUD)

ANALYSIS CONTINUATION

Currently when a person is reported missing, the law enforcement agency enters basic "locate" information into APSIN which is then uploaded to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The information is cleared from APSIN when the person is located. At some point, if the person remains missing, the law enforcement agency will send a report to the department's Missing Persons Clearinghouse. There currently are no consistent standards or protocol for the content, timing, and method of submission of these reports amongst law enforcement agencies.

This analysis assumes the information collected regarding a missing person's disappearance must be immediately submitted to the department's Missing Persons Clearinghouse. Creation and implementation of standardized missing person report forms will be necessary in order to provide law enforcement agencies a consistent method of collecting all of the information regarding a missing person's disappearance as required by this legislation. A means of submitting the information to the department's Missing Persons Clearinghouse must also be developed.

To accomplish this, an analysis and redesign of APSIN and the current missing persons clearinghouse database will be required to ensure these systems can capture the information required by this legislation. This will involve the addition of new fields, screens, and system reports. The possibility of using a web service to capture, submit, and also query missing person information will be investigated.

This analysis assumes it will take eight months of contract programmer analysis, development, coding, and testing of system enhancements at an estimated cost of \$120,000 (\$100/hr x 150 hrs/month x 8 months). Once developed, training of all stakeholders would need to take place. This will involve the development of training materials and the actual training at an estimated cost of \$16,000 (\$100/hr x 160 hrs/month x 1 month). Software (\$10,000), hardware (\$10,000), data migration, and new APSIN programming (\$30,000) are estimated to total \$50,000.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 1
Bill Version: CSSB 247(JUD)
(S) Publish Date: 2/13/08

Identifier (file name): SB247-DPS-ABI-1-25-08 Dept. Affected: Public Safety
Title: "An Act relating to missing persons and unidentified human remains." RDU: Alaska State Troopers
Sponsor: Senator Green Component: Alaska Bureau of Investigation
Requester: Senate Judiciary Component Number: 2744

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

| | Appropriation Required | Information | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | FY 2009 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 |
| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
| Personal Services | 100.8 | | 100.8 | 100.8 | 100.8 | 100.8 | 100.8 | 100.8 |
| Travel | 8.3 | | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 |
| Contractual | 46.6 | | 31.8 | 31.8 | 31.8 | 31.8 | 31.8 | 31.8 |
| Supplies | 4.5 | | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Equipment | 46.6 | | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Land & Structures | | | | | | | | |
| Grants & Claims | | | | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 206.8 | 0.0 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 |

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| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | | | | | | | | |
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| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1002 Federal Receipts | | | | | | | | |
| 1003 GF Match | | | | | | | | |
| 1004 GF | 206.8 | | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts | | | | | | | | |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health | | | | | | | | |
| Other Interagency Receipts | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 206.8 | 0.0 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 | 145.4 |

Estimate of any current year (FY2008) cost: 0.0

POSITIONS

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time | | | | | | | | |
| Part-time | | | | | | | | |
| Temporary | | | | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill provides that certain investigative steps must be taken by a law enforcement agency when a person is reported missing. These duties require a risk assessment, 30 day review, and the collection of additional evidence to include DNA from the family of the missing person.

While it is not expected that this bill will increase the number of missing person reports that the DPS receives, it will increase the length of many investigations. Currently the DPS receives approximately 1500 reports of missing persons annually. The cumulative affect of the additional investigative steps required by this legislation will result in the need for an additional investigator position in the DPS.

Prepared by: Lt. Rodney Dial
Division: Alaska State Troopers
Approved by: Walt Monegan, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety

Phone (907)247-4480
Date/Time 1/25/08 12:20 PM
Date 1/25/2008

FISCAL NOTE # 1

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSSB 247(JUD)

ANALYSIS CONTINUATION

Included in this analysis is one State Trooper - Investigator position based in Anchorage. The funding needed to support this position includes travel, communications, lease space, office supplies, uniforms, ammunition, law enforcement supplies, vehicle, and one-time costs such as academy training, portable radio, computers, firearms, and office furniture.

AUGUST 2005

**Identifying the Missing:
Model State Legislation**

PRESIDENT'S

DNA

INITIATIVE



www.DNA.gov

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

Alberto R. Gonzales
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The National Institute of Justice is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. NIJ's mission is to advance scientific research, development, and evaluation to enhance the administration of justice and public safety.

On October 30, 2004, President Bush signed into law the "Justice for All Act of 2004," which establishes enforceable rights for victims of crimes, enhances DNA collection and analysis efforts, provides for postconviction DNA testing, and authorizes grants to improve the quality of representation in State capital cases.

The President's DNA Initiative—Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology—is a 5-year program that directs more than \$1 billion to improve the use of DNA in the criminal justice system. Designed to help Federal, State, and local forensic laboratories in particular, the initiative provides funding, training, and assistance to ensure that DNA technology reaches its full potential to solve crimes, protect the innocent, and identify missing persons.

Office of Justice Programs
Partnerships for Safer Communities
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Identifying the Missing: Model State Legislation

AUGUST 2005

Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice

NCJ 210740

MODEL STATE MISSING PERSONS STATUTE

AN ACT relating to improving the ability of law enforcement to locate and return missing persons, to improving the identification of human remains, and to improving timely information and notification to family members of missing persons.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF _____:

(A) TITLE _____, _____ CODE, is amended by adding Article XXX to read as follows:

ARTICLE XXX: PROCEDURES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, CORONERS/
MEDICAL EXAMINERS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL
RELATING TO MISSING PERSONS REPORTS AND IDENTIFYING UNIDENTIFIED
PERSONS/HUMAN REMAINS

SEC. XXX.1. MISSING PERSON(S) REPORTS

- (1) REPORT ACCEPTANCE. All law enforcement agencies within the State shall accept without delay any report of a missing person(s). Acceptance of a missing person(s) report may not be refused on any ground. No law enforcement agency may refuse to accept a missing person report on the basis that—
- (A) the missing person(s) is an adult;
 - (B) the circumstances do not indicate foul play;
 - (C) the person(s) has been missing for a short period of time;
 - (D) the person(s) has been missing a long period of time;
 - (E) there is no indication that the missing person(s) was in the jurisdiction served by the law enforcement agency at the time of the disappearance;
 - (F) the circumstances suggest that the disappearance may be voluntary;
 - (G) the person(s) reporting does not have personal knowledge of the facts;

- (H) the reporting individual cannot provide all of the information requested by the law enforcement agency;
 - (I) the reporting person lacks a familial or other relationship with the missing person;
 - (J) or for any other reason.
- (2) **MANNER OF REPORTING.** All law enforcement agencies shall accept missing person(s) reports in person. Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to accept reports by phone or by electronic or other media to the extent that such reporting is consistent with law enforcement policies or practices.
- (3) **CONTENTS OF REPORT.** In accepting a report of a missing person(s), the law enforcement agency shall attempt to gather relevant information relating to the disappearance. The law enforcement agency shall attempt to gather at the time of the report information that shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
- (A) The name of the missing person(s) (including alternative names used);
 - (B) The date of birth;
 - (C) Identifying marks (such as birthmarks, moles, tattoos, scars, etc.);
 - (D) Height and weight;
 - (E) Gender;
 - (F) Race;
 - (G) Current hair color and true or natural hair color;
 - (H) Eye color;
 - (I) Prosthetics, surgical implants, or cosmetic implants;
 - (J) Physical anomalies;
 - (K) Blood type (if known);
 - (L) Drivers License number (if known);
 - (M) Social Security Number (if known);

- (N) A photograph of the missing person(s) (recent photographs are preferable; the agency is encouraged to attempt to ascertain the approximate date the photograph was taken);
- (O) A description of the clothing the missing person(s) was believed to be wearing;
- (P) A description of items that might be with the missing person(s) (jewelry, accessories, shoes or boots etc.);
- (Q) Information on missing person's electronic communications devices such as but not limited to cell phone numbers, email addresses, etc.;
- (R) The reasons why the reporting person(s) believes that the person(s) is missing;
- (S) Name and location of missing person's school or employer (if known);
- (T) Name and location of missing person's dentist and/or primary care physician (if known);
- (U) Any circumstances that may indicate that the disappearance was not voluntary;
- (V) Any circumstances that indicate that the missing person(s) may be at risk of injury or death;
- (W) A description of the possible means of transportation of the missing person(s) (including make, model, color, license, and VIN of a vehicle);
- (X) Any identifying information about a known or possible abductor and/or person(s) last seen with the missing person(s) including:
 - (1) Name;
 - (2) A physical description;
 - (3) Date of birth;
 - (4) Identifying marks;

- (5) The description of possible means of transportation (including make, model, color, license, and VIN of a vehicle);
 - (6) Known associates.
- (Y) Any other information that can aid in locating the missing person(s); and
- (Z) Date of last contact.
- (4) NOTIFICATION AND FOLLOW UP ACTION.
- (A) NOTIFICATION. The law enforcement agency shall notify the person(s) making the report, a family member, or other person(s) in a position to assist the law enforcement agency in its efforts to locate the missing person(s):
- (1) General information about the handling of the missing person(s) case or about intended efforts in the case to the extent that the law enforcement agency determines that disclosure would not adversely affect its ability to locate or protect the missing person(s), to apprehend or prosecute any person(s) criminally involved in the disappearance;
 - (2) That the person(s) making the report or other necessary person(s) should promptly contact the law enforcement agency if the missing person(s) remains missing to provide additional information and materials that will aid in locating the missing person(s). The law enforcement agency should also notify the person(s) of the specific information or materials needed such credit/debit cards the missing person has access to (and other banking information) and records of cell phone use;
 - (3) The law enforcement agency shall notify the person(s) making the report that any DNA samples provided for the missing person(s) case are provided on a voluntary basis and will be used solely to help locate or identify the missing person and will not be used for any other purpose;
 - (4) The law enforcement agency is encouraged to make available informational materials (through publications or electronic or other media) that advise the public about how the information or materials identified in this subsection are used to help locate or identify missing persons.

- (B) FOLLOW UP ACTION. If the person(s) identified in the missing person report remain missing after thirty days, and the additional information and materials specified below have not been received, the law enforcement agency shall attempt to obtain:
- (1) DNA samples from family members and/or from the missing person(s) along with any needed documentation, including any consent forms, required for the use of State or Federal DNA databases including but not limited to the Local DNA Database (LDIS), State DNA Database (SDIS), and National DNA Database (NDIS);
 - (2) An authorization to release dental or skeletal x-rays of the missing person(s);
 - (3) Any additional photographs of the missing person(s) that may aid the investigation or an identification. The law enforcement agency shall not be required to obtain written authorization before it releases publicly any photograph that would aid in the investigation or identification of the missing person(s);
 - (4) Dental information and x-rays; and
 - (5) Fingerprints.
- (C) All DNA samples obtained in missing person(s) cases shall be immediately forwarded to [specify state crime laboratory or other accredited laboratory that will perform the DNA analysis] for analysis. The laboratory should establish procedures for determining how to prioritize analysis of the samples relating to missing persons cases;
- (D) Information relevant to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program shall be entered as soon as possible.
- (E) This subsection shall not be interpreted to preclude a law enforcement agency from attempting to obtain the materials identified in this subsection before the expiration of the thirty-day period.

SEC XXX.2. LAW ENFORCEMENT ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF MISSING PERSON(S) INFORMATION.

(I) PROMPT DETERMINATION OF HIGH-RISK MISSING PERSON(S)

(A) DEFINITION. A high-risk missing person(s) is an individual whose whereabouts are not currently known and the circumstances indicate that the individual may be at risk of injury or death. The circumstances that indicate that an individual is a "high-risk missing person(s)" include any of the following, but are not limited to:

- (1) The person(s) is missing as a result of a stranger abduction;
- (2) The person(s) is missing under suspicious circumstances;
- (3) The person(s) is missing under unknown circumstances;
- (4) The person(s) is missing under known dangerous circumstances;
- (5) The person(s) is missing more than thirty (30) days;
- (6) The person(s) has already been designated as a "high-risk missing person(s)" by another law enforcement agency;
- (7) There is evidence that the person(s) is at risk because:
 - (A) The person(s) missing is in need of medical attention, or prescription medication;
 - (B) The person(s) missing does not have a pattern of running away or disappearing;
 - (C) The person(s) missing may have been abducted by non-custodial parent;
 - (D) The person(s) missing is mentally impaired;
 - (E) The person(s) missing is a person under the age of twenty-one;
 - (F) The person(s) missing has been the subject of past threats or acts of violence.

- (8) Any other factor that may, in the judgment of the law enforcement official, determine that the missing person may be at risk.

(B) LAW ENFORCEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT.

- (1) Upon initial receipt of a missing person(s) report, the law enforcement agency shall immediately determine whether there is a basis to determine that the person(s) missing is a high-risk missing person(s);
- (2) If a law enforcement agency has previously determined that a missing person(s) is not a high-risk missing person(s), but obtains new information, it shall immediately determine whether the information provided to the law enforcement agency indicates that the person(s) missing is a high-risk missing person(s);
- (3) Risk assessments identified in this subsection shall be performed no later than ___ hours after the initial missing person(s) report or the new information was provided to the law enforcement agency.
- (4) Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to establish written protocols for the handling of missing person(s) cases to accomplish the purpose of this act.

(C) LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY REPORTS.

- (1) When the law enforcement agency determines that the missing person(s) is a high-risk missing person(s) it shall notify [specify here the central state agency responsible for handling missing person(s) cases and notifying law enforcement agencies of missing person(s)]. It shall immediately provide to the [specify here the central state agency] the information most likely to aid in the location and safe return of the high-risk missing person(s). It shall provide as soon as practicable all other information obtained relating to the missing person(s) case;
- (2) The [specify here the central state agency] shall promptly immediately notify all law enforcement agencies within the State and surrounding region of the information that will aid in the prompt location and safe return of the high-risk missing person(s);

- (3) The local law enforcement agencies who receive the notification from the State agency specified in subsection (2) shall notify officers to "be on the look out" for the missing person(s) or a suspected abductor;
- (4) The responding local law enforcement agency shall immediately enter all collected information relating to the missing person(s) case in available State and Federal databases. If the responding local law enforcement agency does not have the capability to enter this data directly in the State and Federal databases, the [specify the central state agency] shall immediately enter all collected information relating to the missing person(s) case in available State and Federal databases. The information shall be provided to in accordance with applicable guidelines relating to the databases. The information shall be entered as follows:
 - (A) A missing person(s) report in high-risk missing person(s) cases (and relevant information provided in the report) shall be entered in the National Crime Information Center database immediately, by no more than 2 hours of the determination that the missing person is a high-risk missing person; All other missing person(s) reports (and relevant information provided in the report) shall be entered within one day after the missing person(s) report is received. Supplemental information in high-risk missing person(s) cases should be entered as soon as practicable;
 - (B) All DNA profiles shall be uploaded into the missing persons databases of the State DNA Index System (SDIS) and National DNA Index System (NDIS) after completion of the DNA analysis and other procedures required for database entry;
 - (C) Information relevant to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program shall be entered as soon as possible.
- (5) The [specify the central state agency] shall ensure that person(s) entering data relating to medical or dental records in State or Federal databases are specifically trained to understand and correctly enter the information sought by these databases. The [specify the central agency] is strongly encouraged to either use person(s) with specific expertise in

medical or dental records for this purpose or consult with the [specify here a chief medical examiner, forensic anthropologist, or an odontologist] to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information entered into the State and Federal databases;

- (6) Pursuant to any applicable State criteria, local law enforcement agencies should also provide for the prompt use of an Amber Alert or public dissemination of photographs in appropriate high risk cases;

SEC.XXX.3. REPORTING OF UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS/HUMAN REMAINS

(1) HANDLING OF DEATH SCENE INVESTIGATIONS.

- (A) The [specify central state agency] shall provide information to local law enforcement agencies about best practices for handling death scene investigations;
- (B) The [specify central state agency] shall identify any publications or training opportunities that may be available to local law enforcement agencies or law enforcement officers concerning the handling of death scene investigations.

(2) LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORTS.

- (A) After performing any death scene investigation deemed appropriate under the circumstances, the official with custody of the human remains shall ensure that the human remains are delivered to [specify here appropriate coroner or medical examiner];
- (B) Any person with custody of human remains that are not identified within 24 hours of discovery shall promptly notify the [specify central state agency] of the location of those remains;
- (C) If the person with custody of remains cannot determine whether or not the remains found are human, it shall notify the [specify central state agency] of the existence of possible human remains.

SEC. XXX.4. UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS/HUMAN REMAINS IDENTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES.

- (1) If the official with custody of the human remains is not a medical examiner, the official shall promptly transfer the unidentified remains to the [specify the medical examiner agency qualified to examine human remains for the purpose of identification] with responsibility for seeking to determine the identity of the human remains;
- (2) Notwithstanding any other action deemed appropriate for the handling of the human remains, the medical examiner shall make reasonable attempts to promptly identify human remains. These actions may include but not are limited to obtaining:
 - (A) Photographs of the human remains (prior to an autopsy);
 - (B) Dental or skeletal X-rays;
 - (C) Photographs of items found with the human remains;
 - (D) Fingerprints from the remains (if possible);
 - (E) Sample[s] of tissue suitable for DNA typing (if possible);
 - (F) Sample[s] of whole bone and/or hair suitable for DNA typing;
 - (G) Any other information that may support identification efforts.
- (3) No medical examiner or any other person shall, dispose of, or engage in actions that will materially affect the unidentified human remains before the medical examiner obtains—
 - (A) Samples suitable for DNA identification, archiving;
 - (B) Photographs of the unidentified person/human remains; and
 - (C) All other appropriate steps for identification have been exhausted;
- (4) Cremation of unidentified human remains is prohibited.
- (5) The medical examiner, coroner, or the [agency designated by the central state law enforcement agency] shall make reasonable efforts to obtain prompt DNA analysis of biological samples, if the human remains have not been identified by other means within 30 days.

- (6) The medical examiner, coroner, or the [agency designated by the central state law enforcement agency] shall seek support from appropriate State and Federal agencies for human remains identification efforts. Such support may include, but is not be limited to, available mitochondrial or nuclear DNA testing, federal grants for DNA testing, or Federal grants for crime laboratory or medical examiner office improvement;
- (7) The [medical examiner or other agency designated by central state law enforcement agency] shall promptly enter information in Federal and State databases that can aid in the identification of missing person(s). Information shall be entered into Federal databases as follows:
- (A) Information for the National Crime Information Center within [X] hours;
 - (B) DNA profiles and information shall be entered into the National DNA Index System (NDIS) within five business days after the completion of the DNA analysis and procedures necessary for the entry of the DNA profile; and
 - (C) Information sought by the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program database as soon as practicable.
- (8) If medical examiner office personnel do not input the data directly into the Federal databases, the [specify the central state agency] shall consult with the medical examiners office to ensure appropriate training of the data entry personnel and the establishment of a quality assurance protocol for ensuring the ongoing quality of data entered in the Federal and State databases;
- (9) Nothing in this Act shall be interpreted to preclude any medical examiner office, the [central state law enforcement agency], or a local law enforcement agency from pursuing other efforts to identify unidentified human remains including efforts to publicize information, descriptions or photographs that may aid in the identification of the unidentified remains, allow family members to identify missing person(s), and seek to protect the dignity of the missing person(s).

Explanatory Comments

Each year families in the United States struggle with the agony of having to report a missing loved one. Far too often, missing persons investigations grow cold leaving many to cope with the loss of a loved one without closure. Historically, law enforcement community's ability to locate and ensure a safe return of those missing has been hampered by an inability to share resources and information when conducting investigations and identifying remains.

This model state legislation seeks to address this significant national problem as it relates to reporting persons as missing and the identification of human remains. For cases involving missing persons, law enforcement's ability to locate and ensure a safe return must be improved. This can occur if law enforcement is granted additional tools to identify high-risk missing persons cases and can promptly disseminate critical information to other law enforcement agencies and the public. This model legislation provides a framework for improving law enforcement's response in this regard.

Sec XXX.1. Missing Person(s) Reports. This section provides a proposed statutory scheme that ensures that missing persons reports are promptly taken by law enforcement. National experts on the issues of missing persons and identification have reported that some law enforcement policies are inadvertently impeding the collection of missing persons information. Subsections XXX.1(1)-(2) ensure that any family member or interested person will have multiple options available to make a missing persons report. For jurisdictions covering large geographic areas, the legislation may need to require law enforcement agencies to accept missing persons reports by phone. Subsection XXX.1(3) encourages the collection of specific information that is most likely to aid in the location, swift return, or identification of the missing person. At the same time, this section provides a scheme that allows immediate collection of information likely to be available to the reporting person. Subsection XXX.1(4) provides for notification to persons making law enforcement reports, family members and loved ones about law enforcement efforts for missing person cases generally and, to the extent appropriate, provides information relating to their specific missing person. Subsections XXX.1(4)(B)-(C) ensure the collection within 30 days of additional information or samples that can aid in the identification of human remains.

Section XXX.2. Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting of Missing Persons(s) Information. After the collection of critical information, law enforcement agencies need to be able to analyze it promptly to determine whether the missing person is at risk of immediate harm. This section establishes a mechanism for determining high-risk missing persons cases and disseminating critical information to other law enforcement agencies and the public that can help locate the missing person. The dissemination strategy for high-risk cases maximizes the use of national databases, ensures prompt dissemination of information to patrolling officers, and encourages the use of Amber Alerts (proven to be highly effective in promptly locating abducted juveniles).

Specifically, subsections XXX.2(1)(A)–(B) provide a mechanism for promptly making an assessment whether the missing person is a “high-risk missing person.” Subsection XXX.2(C) provides for the centralized and prompt reporting of a high-risk missing person, the notification of appropriate local law enforcement agencies of the high-risk missing person, and encourages patrolling officers to seek to locate the high-risk missing person and abductor. If the central state agency official in subsection XXX.2(C)(2) is not staffed 24 hours a day, the statute should specify how this notification will be accomplished. Subsection XXX.2(C)(4) ensures prompt reporting of essential information to national and State databases. Subsection XXX.2(C)(6) encourages the use of specially trained person who can enter information in the national databases (as national experts have reported that data entry of this forensic and medical information requires specialized training). Subsection XXX.2(C)(6) also encourages the use of Amber Alerts to locate promptly high-risk missing juveniles.

Section XXX.3. Reporting of Unidentified Persons/Human Remains. Section XXX.3 and Section XXX.4 together provide a step-by-step approach for improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of information that will aid in the identification of human remains. Subsection XXX.3(1) seeks to improve death scene investigations through increased dissemination of best practice information, publications and notification of training opportunities. Subsection XXX.3(2) seeks to ensure that remains are delivered to appropriate agencies and that there is centralized reporting for the state of the existence of unidentified human remains.

Section XXX.4 Unidentified Persons/Human Remains Identification Responsibilities. Subsection XXX.4(1) seeks to ensure that unidentified remains are transferred to a medical examiners office, as that office would be most likely to possess the expertise necessary for an identification. Subsection XXX.4(2) ensures reasonable means are pursued by the medical examiner to make an identification. Section XXX.4.(3) ensures that the remains of unidentified persons are protected from cremation or other actions until the medical examiner conducts an examination and collects of samples to assist in the identification investigation. Section XXX.4(4) encourages that State agencies to seek available support from appropriate Federal agencies for the identification effort. (Currently, such support is available through the National Institute of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Additional information relating to available resources can be found at www.dna.gov.) Section XXX.4(5) and (6) ensures that information critical to identification efforts is entered into existing Federal databases. Section XXX.4(7) makes clear that other identification efforts should be examined and pursued, if appropriate.

For more information on this and other issues, please visit www.DNA.gov.

NIJ is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime

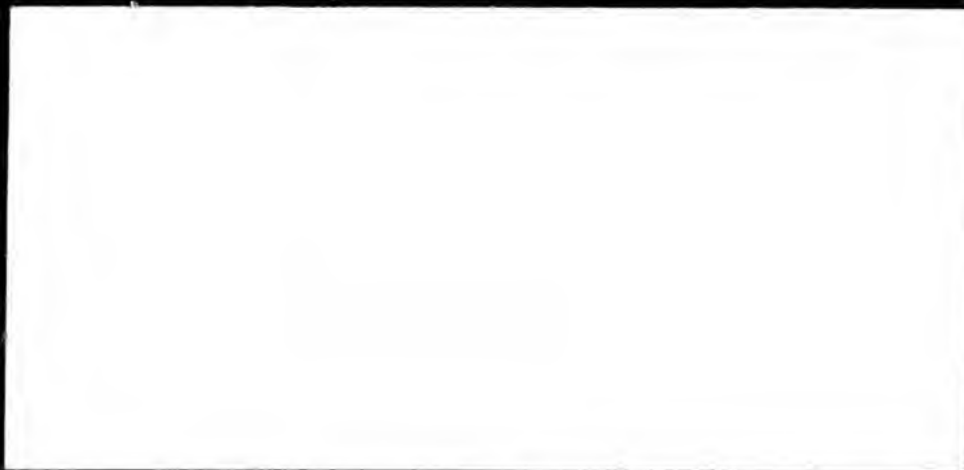
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It has come to my attention that there is a very real and growing problem here in the state of Alaska.

Each year, families in Alaska struggle with the agony of having to report a missing loved one. Far too often missing persons investigations grow cold, leaving many to cope with this loss. Historically, the law enforcement community's ability to locate and ensure a safe return of those missing has been hampered by an inability to share resources and information when conducting investigations and identifying remains.

In collaboration with experts representing State and local law enforcement, policymakers, forensic scientists, medical examiners and coroners, and crime victims, the U.S. Department of Justice has developed model State legislation. This model legislation seeks to address the national problems of missing persons and the identification of human remains.

For cases involving missing persons, law enforcement's ability to locate and ensure a safe return must be improved. Law enforcement must be granted additional tools to identify high-risk missing persons cases and promptly disseminate critical information to other law enforcement agencies and the public. This model legislation provides framework for improving law enforcement's response.

It suggests ways States can improve the collection of critical information about missing persons, prioritize high-risk missing persons cases, and ensure prompt dissemination of critical information to other law enforcement agencies and the public that can improve the likelihood of a safe return. At the same time, this model legislation suggests an approach for collecting information during the missing persons reporting process that can later be used to help identify human remains.

The model legislation will also ensure that information that could help identify human remains is promptly collected and reported to national databases. Specifically, the model legislation suggests a mechanism for improving death scene investigations, centralizing within the State the reporting of unidentified remains, ensuring the delivery of human remains to an entity that can conduct an appropriate examination, ensuring the timely reporting of identifying information to national databases, and maximizing available resources that can reduce the cost of identifications.

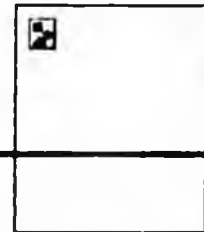
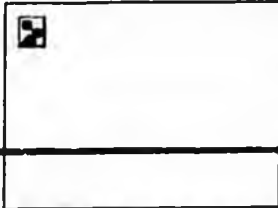
There are an estimated 40,000-50,000 unidentified deceased persons in the US. Many of these persons may be reported missing, but without the model legislation in place as law, this number will continue to grow. This leaves families of the missing without answers, sometimes for years, and unfortunately, sometimes forever.

With more than 100,000+ missing persons cases open in the US, it is clear that we must place more importance upon actions taken that will decrease this number. We are, after all, not talking about numbers, but about human beings. These missing persons are loved and missed by their families. We need to take swift and firm action to put into place laws which will give these families hope and increase the number who come back home.

Sincerely,

Mary Weir
407 E Caribou Ave
Palmer AK 99645
janedoe.17@hotmail.com

*Mother of
Samantha Bonnell #1967-9/24/05
aka Jane Doe #17-05*



GARY PENROD, SHERIFF-CORONER

August 17, 2007

To: Legislators for the state of Alaska

RE: Letter in support of for Missing Persons Legislation in Alaska

I am a deputy coroner investigator with 15 years of experience in one of the largest county jurisdictions in the world (20,000 square miles). This department serves a population of nearly two million, and investigates just over 10,000 deaths a year. I have personally investigated nearly 6,000 deaths in my career. My current duties as Unidentified Persons Coordinator are to identify the just over 300 long-term unidentified persons cases being actively investigated. I directly assist the Sheriff Department's administration of nearly 10,000 missing persons reports annually and have developed a missing persons identifier records acquisition protocol.

My experience tells me that there are only three scientific means by which a person who is either unwilling (actively hiding or psychological disability) or unable (unconscious or dead) to identify themselves: fingerprints, dental records, and DNA. These vital "identifier records" must be obtained and submitted into state and federal searchable databases. Our goal, as missing person investigators, must be to put into play those items that will allow the missing person to be detected by law enforcement's "radar." The only way to ensure that these crucial records are obtained and submitted is to compel their acquisition by legislation.

It is a sad reality that those jurisdictions that do not require submissions do not regularly or adequately complete these submissions. Nationally, dental records are the most common identifier records submitted, and on average these are entered for only approximately 4% of the missing persons records.

Legislation must mandate the following:

- Missing person reports must be taken without fail and without delay - priority assigned over crimes of property
- Identifier records must be obtained and submitted into state and national databases
 - Fingerprints** "registered" into Automated Fingerprint Identification System (state) and Integrated AFIS (federal)
 - Dental records** (charts and X-rays) to the state clearinghouse and the National Dental Image Repository (FBI)
 - dental characteristics updated into the NCIC record
 - DNA** (arrest and reference samples) into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)
- Training for missing persons investigators

For the legislature of the State of Alaska to settle for any less is to perpetuate this epidemic in our society.

Sincerely,

David Van Norman
Deputy Coroner Investigator/Unidentified Persons Coordinator
San Bernardino County Sheriff Department - Coroner Division
175 S. Lena Rd., San Bernardino, CA 92415
Office: 909-387-2978
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Palmer woman's daughter disappeared for 19 months

Photos of bodies on Web sites left mother with nightmares

By ANDREW WELLNER
awellner@adn.com

(Published: September 14, 2007)

PALMER -- The phone call came Sept. 24, 2005.

Mary Weir's daughter, Samantha Bonnell, had left Alaska for California earlier that year, just two or three days shy of her 18th birthday.

Now, Samantha's boyfriend was calling. He told Weir he and her daughter had had a fight at a movie theater in Montclair. Samantha had run off. Had Weir heard from her daughter?

She said she hadn't.

It was the last she heard of Samantha for almost six months. And it would be a year and a half before she found out what had happened that night.

Her daughter died crossing a busy highway on foot. Her body ended up in a San Bernardino County morgue, one of hundreds of unidentified corpses waiting for family members or friends to find them, claim them and take them home, according to deputy coroner David Van Norman.

Even after all this time, her mother still doesn't know exactly what led to Samantha's death. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department announced this week it had ruled out foul play, according to coroner's spokeswoman Sandy Fatland.

As authorities tried to piece together the girl's last minutes, Weir searched the Internet, scanning Web pages devoted to unidentified bodies for her missing daughter.

The search left her skeptical of -- and at times angry at -- the system that allows a body to go unidentified for so long.

"For the last 19 months I've been searching every Internet Web site I can find with unidentified bodies," Weir said in April. "It is, it's not something I would want anybody to have to go through,"

Though she said a handful of Web sites post photos of the actual bodies, photos that left her with nightmares, most show artist renderings or computer composite images instead.

But they still contain stories of what happened to the person. That, in some ways, is almost worse



Weir's hands frame a portrait of her daughter that was made when Bonnell was 16 years old. "I'd like to get her story out so that this doesn't happen to anyone else," Weir said recently. (EVAN R. STEINHAUSER / Anchorage Daily News)



Mary Weir is the mother of Samantha Bonnell, who lived in California after leaving Alaska in 2005. Police reports there show that Bonnell was struck and fatally injured by cars on Interstate 10 in Montclair in September 2005. Her body went unidentified for a year and a half. (EVAN R. STEINHAUSER / Anchorage Daily News)

than the photos, Weir said.

"Before I knew what she was doing, she was staying up all night long while I slept, going through sites on the computer," said Weir's husband, Paul Weir.

"I thought as long as I kept it secret I wasn't looking for a dead body," Mary Weir said.

NO KNOWN ADDRESS

Samantha was an avid reader who wanted to be a corporate lawyer, her mother said. As a girl, she read law books and the entirety of Shakespeare before she left elementary school.

But her daughter was also a free spirit, Weir said. She got into the Valley meth scene in high school and was impossible to keep home. Though they'd fought in the past, it was strange Samantha hadn't called. The longest she'd stayed out of contact was six weeks.

Soon after Samantha's boyfriend called, Weir tried to file a missing persons report. She said she got the same response from all the agencies she called in California -- without a last known address she couldn't file a report. And besides, Bonnell was 18. It's not illegal for an adult to be missing, Weir said she was told.

Then, in February 2006, Bonnell's suitcases showed up, inexplicably, under a carport in Hanahan, S.C.

"I was like, 'Oh my God, she's still alive. There's hope. There's hope,'" Weir said. "But it just turned into another dead end."

The police in Hanahan called Weir asking if she knew her daughter's whereabouts. Weir told them the story and they told her to file a report with Alaska State Troopers, just to get the information into the system.

So finally a trooper, Sgt. Kathy Peterson -- now a lieutenant-- took the report.

Weir said she kept looking.

Nearly a year after they were found, Bonnell's bags arrived from South Carolina. Inside, Weir found one sock she'd bought her and a shirt that might have been hers. Otherwise, the contents belonged to someone else, probably a man, Weir said. She still has no idea how the bags ended up in South Carolina or who was using them.

In April she found a composite photo on a Web site, doenetwork.org.

"I looked at it and I said I think that might be her," Weir said.

April 1 she e-mailed the Web site to Peterson and asked that she check with San Bernardino County, where Jane Doe 17-05 was in cold storage. Peterson said she'd look into it.

More than two weeks later, on the 19th, Weir called San Bernardino herself.

"I said, 'I don't even know if I can do this but I think this is my daughter. I want to check it,'" Weir said.

Within 24 hours she'd sent them Samantha's dental records and been told they matched. In less

than a week, she'd sent the coroner the originals and it was confirmed.

The young woman's body in that California cemetery belonged to her daughter.

SHE RAN AS IF BEING CHASED

Then more details of Samantha's death emerged.

Five months later, her mother says she's numb to the details but her words stall when trying to recount them.

The California police reports show that, within an hour of when Weir got that call in 2005, her daughter was hit by at least two cars on Interstate 10 in Montclair, Calif., Weir said.

"I don't even want to think about what kind of a mess it made," she said. "I'm afraid to ask."

The spot on the highway is close to a theater. Witnesses said Bonnell ran across the highway, as if being chased, Weir said. She was not carrying identification.

"No personal belongings whatsoever except for the clothing on her back," Paul Weir said.

"Nothing, not Chap Stick or lip gloss," Mary Weir said.

Once Samantha was identified, Weir talked to coroners in California. They told her they had kept Samantha's body in cold storage longer than most because she seemed like the type of person who had people who cared for her.

The only people at the burial were coroner's staff.

Weir said that at first she was planning on leaving her daughter there. But then the coroner's office told her she was in the county cemetery, in a grave used to store unclaimed bodies.

They told her "right now she was in there by herself," Weir said, "I said, 'She's in there by her ... what?' Well, they stack them up to five deep."

She arranged to have Samantha's body flown to Oregon.

WHAT TOOK SO LONG?

Though she was noticeably more subdued during an interview this month, in April Weir was visibly angry with Peterson. What did Peterson do with the information she'd forwarded and why did she have to track her daughter down on her own? What took so long?

Earlier this month Peterson explained that law enforcement generally wants reports filed closer to where the person went missing.

"You don't have any idea where to start in another state," she said. "The reason I took this case is because she had already indicated she had tried those avenues and was unsuccessful."

Peterson said she did what she could, then forwarded the case to the state's Missing Person's Clearing House. Those folks have in-state cases to deal with that they prioritize before moving on to others, she said.

What angered Weir the most, she said, is her perception that she sent Peterson a link to Samantha's doenetwork.org page and the trooper did nothing with it.

Peterson said she did do something -- she sent it to the clearinghouse. But she didn't feel right asking Weir to work directly with them as she'd been bounced around so much already.

Weir this summer started working to get legislation passed to make it mandatory for law enforcement agencies to take missing persons reports, even for people over the age of 18 missing out of state. She's been talking to legislators and, really, anybody she can buttonhole.

"You're not safe standing next to me at the grocery store," Weir said. "I've become the very thing I never wanted to be -- an activist."

She gets e-mails from people with missing children.

And she hasn't stopped looking at unidentified bodies on the Internet. There's one case she thinks she can solve -- a woman found wearing a necklace from a fraternity or sorority.

"I'll probably spend the rest of my life trying to put a name to somebody," Weir said.

On Mother's Day, Samantha was buried in Rainier, Ore., where a lot of Weir's family lives.

The funeral was well attended. There was a collection box for donations to doenetwork.org.

Afterwards, they collected petals from Bonnell's coffin piece and spread them on the aisle at her sister's wedding.

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With help from advocacy group, mom finds body of missing daughter

By ANDREW WELLNER, Anchorage Daily News

(Published: September 20, 2007)

WASILLA, Alaska (AP) - Law enforcement didn't help Mary Weir track down her missing daughter this spring. On her own, she found her daughter's picture on the Internet and connected her to Jane Doe 17-05 in San Bernardino County, Calif.

Samantha Bonnell left her Palmer home two or three days shy of her 18th birthday and moved to California, Weir said. The last Weir heard of Samantha was a September 2005 phone call from her boyfriend saying she'd run off after a fight at a Montclair, Calif., movie theater.

It wasn't until April that Weir learned her daughter died that night, struck by several cars as she ran across Interstate 10. Samantha had no identification on her and she lay unclaimed at the San Bernardino County Coroner's Office until Weir called.

Alaska State Troopers took a missing persons report for Weir after Samantha's luggage surfaced in South Carolina. Weir's tenacity led her to the coroner's office.

Still she wasn't acting alone. She had help from Doe Network, a missing/unidentified persons advocacy group and from deputy coroner investigator David Van Norman, San Bernardino County's unidentified persons coordinator.

Though the news was bad, Weir said Van Norman gave her the first comfort she'd had in 19 months. Finally she knew what happened.

160 ATTEMPTS TO IDENTIFY BODY

"Can you imagine the courage it would take for a mother, terrified, not knowing the fate of her young daughter, to call a coroner?" Van Norman wrote by e-mail.

Weir's call was the 160th attempt by someone to match a missing person with Jane Doe 17-05, Van Norman wrote.

He counts himself an advocate for unidentified persons. His e-mail was at its most strident in criticizing law enforcement for what he sees as its relaxed attitude toward missing persons reports. He said he's heard countless stories of people turned away while trying to report someone missing. And he was very critical of the National Crime Information Center report troopers made for Weir.

"Samantha's NCIC gave the date that she was last seen as six months after she died!" Van Norman wrote.

Lt. Kathy Peterson, who took the report, said that's true, the dates were incorrect. But she was working with the best Weir could remember at the time. She pointed out that the other information that leads to matches - height, weight, hair and eye color - was correct.

Definitive matches come from dental records, DNA or fingerprints, Peterson said. And she forwarded dental records Weir gave her to the state's Missing Persons Clearinghouse to be entered electronically with the report. They were waiting to be entered when Weir called California, she said.

Weir and Van Norman both said Weir could have corrected the report had she been allowed to read it. Peterson said that generally those reports are confidential.

Van Norman said that about 100 bodies show up at his office every year and are labeled Jane, John or Undetermined Doe. He said 95 percent of those are quickly identified and claimed. But the unclaimed cases add up. Currently there are 250 active unidentified person cases in his office, he said.

Nationally, as of July, law enforcement lists 6,048 unidentified bodies and 106,255 missing persons, according to Todd Matthews, media director for Doe Network.

Trooper spokeswoman Megan Peters said troopers know of 1,154 missing people as of Sept. 10 in Alaska. The number fluctuates daily, Peters said, as it includes 157 runaways, who are lost and found frequently.

PUBLIC WEB SITE OFFERS HOPE

The Web site on which Weir found Samantha's picture, doenetwork.org, is run by a group composed of hundreds of members, dozens of whom are actively working to match missing persons with unidentified bodies nationwide, Matthews said by phone from Livingston, Tenn.

"I knew about her case before I knew Mary," Matthews said.

He hosts an Internet radio show devoted to unidentified bodies and missing persons and at one point interviewed Van Norman.

"He actually described a Jane Doe and that turned out to be Samantha," Matthews said.

Almost all of Doe Network's members have a story similar to Weir's, Matthews said. He's no exception.

In 1998, after 10 years obsessed with the case, Matthews managed to identify the body of Barbara Ann Hackman-Taylor, whose unidentified body was discovered by his father-in-law in 1968 in Kentucky. The story of his search is detailed on his Web site, tentgirl.com.

Matthews said that when Weir called him after having identified Samantha, he put her in touch with Hackman-Taylor's sister to help Weir with what she was going through.

In his work with the Doe Network, Matthews said information is the one thing he thinks would help most in solving the problem of missing and unidentified persons. If law enforcement could create a standard missing persons report that is entered into a national database to be compared against other uniform reports, maybe the number of open cases would drop.

But the key is to get law enforcement to use the system.

"It's not going to be effective if you don't use it," Matthews said.

Until that happens, Van Norman's advice for families of missing persons was clear.

"If any family, anywhere, is told by law enforcement that they will not take a report, that family should keep calling up the chain of command of the department, and keep on calling, through their legislative representatives, to the governor, if that's what it takes," he wrote.

Information from: Anchorage Daily News, <http://www.adn.com>

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