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To: "justice4billy" <justice4billy@optonline.net>
Sent: Monday, July 02, 2007 6:58 AM
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Billy Smolinski's law becomes a reality

By: Marilyn Moss, Special to the Bulletin 06/28/2007

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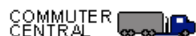
The astounding volume of missing person cases and unidentified remains in this country has been referred to as "the nation's silent mass disaster" by the National Institute of Justice. According to the NIJ, there are at least 100,000 active missing person cases in this country; almost half of them are adults. Much has been done concerning the investigation of missing children, but only a few states have adopted legislation to enhance their policies for handling missing adult cases.

Connecticut has now joined that select cohort of states that have taken steps to improve missing adult investigations. During the current legislative session, the state passed Public Act 07-151, an act concerning the Police Officer Standards and Training Council and missing persons, which goes into effect January 2008. The purpose of the law is to standardize procedures and training for law enforcement personnel on how to pursue investigations concerning missing adults.

Efforts to adopt this law began with the perseverance of Janice Smolinski, whose 31-year-old son, Billy, went missing from Waterbury in August 2004. As with many other cases involving a missing adult, the police response was slow. The Waterbury police assumed that Billy Smolinski was out and about and would return of his own accord. The Smolinski family knew that such behavior was very unusual. Despite their persistence, the Smolinskis received little satisfaction from the Waterbury police department.

Frustrated, Janice Smolinski pursued her own leads. In that process, she contacted Vickie Nardello, state representative for Bethany, Cheshire and Prospect. Nardello was horrified by the problems the Smolinskis had encountered. Taking





decisive action, Nardello sponsored a bill concerning missing adults. That bill was co-sponsored by Joe Crisco, state senator for Bethany and Woodbridge, and Stephen Dargan, state representative for West Haven.

The legislation introduced by Nardello was crafted on model legislation developed by the US Department of Justice. As the bill made its way through the legislature, it was modified at the request of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association. The association expressed concerns about the possible ramifications to law enforcement officers with any changes to the statutes, saying they wanted to weigh in on the measure.

As a compromise, the legislature amended the legislation so that regulations could be recommended by the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council. The POSTC is a board that sets training requirements and standards for police officers in the state.

According to Nardello, "POSTC will take the elements of the bill to determine which and how those elements can be fully implemented."

Dargan said, "POSTC is going to look at laws in other states to see what works and what doesn't work."

"We want to cover the concerns of the legislators. We have very talented people here who will do the research," said Thomas Flaherty, executive director of POSTC.

Nardello added, "If done properly, it will satisfy the intent of the bill."

Although the legislators agreed to give POSTC the opportunity to design the requirements, the lawmakers have certain expectations. Nardello said, "They'll have to give us good justification if they don't want to incorporate something into the bill."

The POSTC members have already met with Dargan, Nardello and Michael Lawlor, representative for East Haven and co-chair of the Judiciary Committee. Nardello said, "The council will check back with us in the fall when we will meet with them again."

Dargan said, "This is important legislation."

"I'm very pleased. It's the first step," said Nardello.

State Sen. Joe Crisco did not return calls placed to him.

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