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Legislature approves bill to improve missing persons investigations

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(Hartford-AP) _ State lawmakers have approved a plan they say will improve how police investigate missing person cases and how information is released to victims' families.

The Senate voted 36-0 in favor of the bill and sent it to Governor Rell. The House approved it unanimously last month.

The legislation would require the state's Police Officer Standards and Training Council to develop new policies for municipal departments by next January. The policies would include guidelines for accepting reports, the kind of information police must collect and what details police should provide to relatives of people who have vanished.

The bill was spurred by Waterbury resident Janice Smolinski, whose 31-year-old son Billy disappeared in 2004 and remains missing. Janice Smolinski says police made her family wait three days to report his disappearance, and authorities later lost or misplaced DNA samples three times. She also says the family had to organize its own search parties and pressure police to fingerprint Billy Smolinski's truck.



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