

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 435.

The question was taken.

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

JENNIFER'S LAW

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1915) to provide grants to the States to improve the reporting of unidentified and missing persons.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1915

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as "Jennifer's Law".

SEC. 2. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

The Attorney General is authorized to provide grant awards to States to enable States to improve the reporting of unidentified and missing persons.

SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY.

(a) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant award under this Act, a State shall submit an application at such time and in such form as the Attorney General may reasonably require.

(b) CONTENTS.—Each such application shall include assurances that the State shall, to the greatest extent possible—

(1) report to the National Crime Information Center and when possible, to law enforcement authorities throughout the State regarding every deceased unidentified person, regardless of age, found in the State's jurisdiction;

(2) enter a complete profile of such unidentified person in compliance with the guidelines established by the Department of Justice for the National Crime Information Center Missing and Unidentified Persons File, including dental records, x-rays, and fingerprints, if available;

(3) enter the National Crime Information Center number or other appropriate number assigned to the unidentified person on the death certificate of each such unidentified person; and

(4) retain all such records pertaining to unidentified persons until a person is identified.

SEC. 4. USES OF FUNDS.

A State that receives a grant award under this Act may use such funds received to establish or expand programs developed to improve the reporting of unidentified persons in accordance with the assurances provided in the application submitted pursuant to section 3(b).

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO).

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking the Committee on the Judiciary for this bipartisan approach, for allowing us to bring this important legislation to the floor, and in particular, let me thank the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HENRY HYDE) for his consideration in allowing this bill to go forward.

Let me begin by saying that I am the proud father of two beautiful daughters, Molly and Kelsey. I cannot imagine not having them in my life. What would I do without their smiling faces to welcome me home, their gifts of crayon drawings to brighten my day, or their heartwarming goodnight kisses? Every time I look at them I know how blessed I am.

But today, Mr. Speaker, we turn our focus to less fortunate families, families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. For these families we offer Jennifer's Law, legislation inspired by a tragic story of a still missing Long Islander whose mother and dad have been one of the motivating forces behind this legislation.

In 1993, 21-year-old Jennifer Wilmer left her family's suburban New York home for California in pursuit of a dream. It was a dream to make it on her own. Nine months later Jennifer's mom sent her a plane ticket to return home for a visit because she missed her.

All Jennifer had to do was to pick up the ticket from the office of the local travel agent. She left the house she shared with friends to pick up the ticket, but she never made it to that agency. She never came home. Mr. Speaker, Jennifer is still missing.

Unfortunately, this story is all too common. People report thousands of missing persons each year. Sadly, many of these people will never be found. In many instances, at least we have the information necessary to bring closure to some of these cases. Unfortunately, most of this information remains hidden, like a needle in a haystack.

In 1975, the FBI created the Missing Persons File within its National Crime Information Center to address the problems associated with collecting and organizing information on missing persons. This new file inspired the creation of the Unidentified Persons File 8 years later.

In theory, data on a missing person should be entered into the Missing Persons File at the time a missing persons report is filed with local law enforcement officials, and the same is true for John or Jane Does.

Unfortunately, the coordination of these two files that would make it possible to close thousands of missing person cases is not taking place. Why? Certainly it is the fact that the success of one search depends upon its connection to the other, and although local law enforcement officials enter the proper information into the Missing Persons File, they often fail to enter this information about John Does into the unidentified persons file. What kind of information I am talking about is fingerprint information, DNA information, various samples. Without up-to-date information in both files, most cases cannot be closed.

For example, last year New York reported more than 4,500 missing persons, but only 279 unidentified persons. Any one of these unidentified persons might also be a missing person, but without cross-referencing, this fact will never surface.

The ability to cross-reference within the NCIC has existed for 16 years, and this technology is available to all law enforcement agencies. The problem is, the system remains underutilized, so even if you have a county local law enforcement agency that is doing its job in terms of entering missing persons information, if another agency in another county in another State is not doing the job, they will never link up between missing persons and unidentified persons.

The issue is not negligence, but instead stems from inadequate funding. Jennifer's Law would authorize \$2 million for States to apply for a competitive grant program to cover the costs associated with entering complete files of unidentified crime victims into the FBI's National Crime Information Center database. It is a true model of Federal, State, and local partnership.

If passed today, Jennifer's Law will help ease the suffering of families coping with the anguish of unanswered questions. It will reassure families that everything possible is being done to reunite them with loved ones. The funding for this project is a small price to pay compared to the cost of not knowing that someone you love has been found. Without this funding, Mr. Speaker, thousands of families will be deprived of a chance for closure, a chance to at least move on.

Mr. Speaker, crime is not just a statistic when it involves a family member. As a dad, I can only imagine the pain and torment experienced by families such as Jennifer's. I hope that Jennifer's Law will serve to somewhat lessen the incredible pain these families have in losing a child or a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to talk about H.R. 1915, Jennifer's Law, which would help parents of missing children bring closure to their nightmare and begin the healing process.

As my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) just said, the Committee on the Judiciary is to be commended and he, too, is to be commended for the work that he has done in bringing this bill to the floor of the House of Representatives, and to make sure that we can do everything that we can to correct the shortcomings that exist in present law.

Under current law, States are required to report information on missing children to the FBI so that data can be entered into the National Crime Information Center, NCIC, their missing persons file.

□ 1430

However, States are not required to report the information to the NCIC's Unidentified Person File whenever they recover an unidentified body. Unfortunately, a logical and complete cross-referencing of the missing person file and the unidentified person file does not currently exist.

Every week unidentified bodies of children are found, but the parents of missing children are not contacted to make positive identifications. Not knowing that the body of an unidentified child has been recovered, thousands of parents continue their heart-wrenching search for their missing loved one.

Jessica Cane is a young girl who was abducted, we assume abducted, perhaps murdered, we do not know her whereabouts, 3 weeks before her 18th birthday. Today her parents continue to search for her, believe that she is alive, hope that she is alive, and expect that she will return home one day. So with that hope, they travel from city to city, they spend their money, they spend their time, their waking hours hoping that Jessica will return to them.

As the chairman and founder of the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, I see the pain families of missing or abducted children endure firsthand. I can only imagine the agony of GiGi Arnett Harris' family and the agony that they suffered when this Houston, Texas family discovered that GiGi's body had remained unidentified in a morgue for 2 years while they unknowingly continued their search.

Well, stories like these would not occur if Jennifer's Law were enacted. This law would correct identification problems by encouraging States to report unidentified people to the NCIC in their jurisdiction in return for Federal grant funds.

It is time to bring comfort to families of missing children. It is the very least Congress can do to alleviate their suffering. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting in favor of H.R. 1915, the Jennifer's Law.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) not just for his support for this particular piece of legislation, but for his work on behalf of missing and exploited children.

What he has done is a valuable public service in heading up the caucus, and obviously his work in the Committee on the Judiciary was very helpful in ensuring that this bill got to the floor. This is a bipartisan approach, Mr. Speaker.

I say as a dad and former prosecutor that this is a modest but very important way in which we could forge a stronger partnership with families, with advocates, with the law enforcement community, to do the right things for those who have an unimaginable tragedy in their life, losing a child or loved one and not knowing their whereabouts.

This effort is supported by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and I have a letter in support, as well as the Jacob Wetterling Foundation in Minnesota, both important institutions in furthering the cause and building public awareness.

That being said, once again I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON), thank the Committee on the Judiciary, and ask for support for the bill.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the courageous struggle and profound hope of my constituents JoAnn and Carl Rock in the search for their missing son, Robert, and to offer support for Jennifer's Law, H.R. 1915, introduced by my distinguished colleague Congressman RICK LAZIO. I thank Congressman LAZIO for introducing this bipartisan bill.

In 1995, 26-year-old Robert Rock, son of JoAnn and Carl Rock, disappeared, and he has not yet been found. Because he is a missing person over the age of 18, Missing Persons Agencies have given Robert's case a low priority. Robert's parents believe that their son may be an unidentified body in New York. JoAnn and Carl Rock's hope of discovering the fate of their son relies upon this Congress passing a bill encouraging all law enforcement agencies to report every unidentified body to a federal computer database.

Jennifer's Law consists of establishing a grant award in order to encourage that a State, to the greatest extent possible, will be involved in reporting to the National Crime Information Center throughout the State and other authorities regarding every deceased unidentified person, creating a complete profile of such unidentified person, and inputting a National Crime Information Center number on the death certificate of such an unidentified

missing person. Furthermore, all such records must be retained until a person is identified as part of the application process for the grant.

I urge my colleagues to offer aid to all parents who may be on a search to locate a missing daughter or son by supporting H.R. 1915. Jennifer's Law is essential in bringing relief to families such as the Rock family, that face the pain inflicted by a life full of unanswered questions about the whereabouts of their child. H.R. 1915 provides invaluable hope to families whose sons and daughters have vanished and remain missing. I therefore ask that all my colleagues vote today in support of Jennifer's Law.

Mr. Speaker, Jennifer's Law is an example of exceptional legislation resulting in better government. The tragic story of Carl and JoAnn Rock demonstrates the need for comprehensive action on the behalf of the thousands of families searching for missing loved ones. H.R. 1915, Jennifer's Law, costs little, but it gives in return the priceless gift of human compassion.

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to express my strong support for H.R. 1915, otherwise known as Jennifer's Law. This legislation will grant states the necessary funds to assist them in entering files of unidentified victims into both the national Missing Persons File and the Unidentified Persons File.

"Jennifer's Law" is named after Jennifer Wilmer, who has been missing since September 13, 1993. When a person is missing, it touches the entire community. In the case of Jennifer, her mother Susan has become an aggressive advocate for consolidating federal databases on missing and unidentified persons. The fact is, involvement and cooperation at the local level is of the utmost importance in saving the lives of those classified as missing.

NCIC created the Missing Persons File in 1975, and eight years later the Unidentified Persons File was created as a database of NCIC. Currently, local law enforcement agencies under information into the Missing Persons File, but do not report cases to the Unidentified Persons File. This means the data is not being cross-referenced.

In an effort to promote cooperation at all levels, H.R. 1915 will require states to meet certain criteria before they receive these federal funds. States must report missing cases to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and law enforcement authorities throughout the state regarding every deceased unidentified person found. States will also be required to enter a profile of the unidentified person, the number assigned to the unidentified person on his or her death certificate and retain all of the records until the person is identified.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to work together to find America's missing persons. Let's protect our loved ones and pass H.R. 1915.

Mr. KING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of my constituents, Fred and Susan Wilmer of Baldwin, NY, whose daughter Jennifer Wilmer has been missing since September 13, 1993, to express my strong support for the Jennifer's Law Act.

I am pleased that Congress has made it a priority to support efforts to locate and identify

all missing persons. This critical legislation will require all law enforcement agencies to cross reference missing person files with unidentified person files, which believe it or not is rarely done. It will also authorize \$2 million in competitive grants so that states can cover the costs of providing this well needed service.

Thousands of Americans go through the daily anguish the Wilmer family experiences, wondering if they will ever see their loved ones again. I believe the Jennifer's Law Act will provide the opportunity for many of these families to find peace of mind and closure to their unfortunate tragedies.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Wilmers who have tirelessly transformed their personal grief into political action by committing themselves to helping other families with missing loved ones. They established "Finding Our Children Under Stress" FOCUS, an organization dedicated to supporting other parents in distress and promoting state and federal legislation to improve methods of locating missing persons.

Mr. Speaker, as an original cosponsor of this important legislation, I wholeheartedly urge my colleagues to support this crucial legislation today. The Jennifer's Law Act is a step in the right direction that will help more and more American families locate their loved ones and I strongly urge its adoption.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to strongly support the H.R. 1915 that would Improve Reporting of Unidentified & Missing Persons.

Aptly nicknamed "Jennifer's Law," this bill will provide much needed assistance to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and will help ease the pain of families who admirably continue to search for lost loved ones. I empathize with the families such as the family of the young woman this bill was named after. As a mother, I can understand the anguish of having a child move across the country, only to have that child disappear without a trace.

This measure helps to solve such disappearances by urging States to improve their reporting on unidentified persons, people found who have memory loss, or unidentified deceased persons.

By establishing a grant program under this measure, States would have the incentive to provide far more comprehensive information concerning unidentified deceased persons. States will receive these funds only if they report to NCIC and State law enforcement authorities every deceased unidentified person found in their jurisdiction, provide a complete profile of unidentified persons—including dental records, X-rays, and finger prints, enter the NCIC number assigned to deceased unidentified persons on their death certificates, and keep all records of about unidentified persons until they are identified.

This legislation is necessary to bolster the NCIC's current files for unidentified persons. Prior to H.R. 1915, unidentified records were woefully underreported. The proposed grant program would end this dearth of information and would allow the NCIC to provide better, and far more comprehensive, information to the American public.

This legislation provides a great service to the NCIC and the American public, and by passing this bill, perhaps we will stem future

suffering amongst our families. It is my hope that legislation such as this will help reunite these families with their lost loved ones.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, on June 12, residents of the Central Coast of California were devastated to learn that Christina Williams hadn't returned to her family's home after walking the dog. Seven long months later her body was found less than three miles from her home.

I was pleased to become an original cosponsor of H.R. 1915, a bill that to provide \$2 million in competitive grants to the States to improve the reporting of unidentified and missing children. In order to receive a grant, a state would report to the National Crime Information Center and (when possible to law enforcement authorities within the state) information on every deceased unidentified person, including dental records, x-rays and fingerprints. The states would then enter the National Crime Information Center registration number or other identifying number, on the unidentified person's death certificate.

This simple cross-referencing of missing persons files against unidentified persons files will bring closure to thousands of families who anxiously await information on their loved ones. In California alone, there are over 25,000 missing person files, and only some 1,800 unidentified persons files. While Christina was found close to home which made identification easier, there are thousands of families in California who teeter on the edge of the chasm of hope and despair who will benefit from passage of H.R. 1915.

I urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 1915 in memory of Christina Williams.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, again I congratulate the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) on the good work that he has done on this bill because it will make a difference for people like Susan Wilmer, the mother of Jennifer.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1915.

The question was taken.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceeding on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1915.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6 p.m.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6 p.m.

□ 1802

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. EWING) at 6 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will now put the question on approval of the Journal and then on each motion to suspend the rules on which further proceedings were postponed earlier today in the order in which that motion was entertained.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

Approval of the Journal, de novo;
H.R. 435, concurring in Senate amendment, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 1915, by the yeas and nays.

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the second such vote in this series.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the pending business is the question de novo of the Speaker pro tempore's approval of the Journal of the last day's proceedings.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 325, nays 42, answered "present" 3, not voting 63, as follows:

[Roll No. 167]

YEAS—325

Abercrombie	Ballenger	Bentsen
Allen	Barcia	Bereuter
Armey	Barr	Berkley
Bachus	Barrett (NE)	Berry
Baird	Barrett (WI)	Biggert
Baker	Bartlett	Blirakis
Baldacci	Barton	Bishop
Baldwin	Bass	Blagojevich