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Cornyn, Welch Introduce the Carla Walker Act to Help Solve Cold Cases

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Bill Supports Advanced DNA Technology for Investigative Agencies

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Peter Welch (D-VT) today introduced the *Carla Walker Act*, which would dedicate federal grant funds to support forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) DNA analysis and help solve previously unsolvable cold cases. The bill is named for Carla Walker, a Fort Worth native whose murderer was finally identified 46 years after her death with the help of this technology.

“46 years after Carla Walker’s tragic murder left her family desperately seeking answers, her killer was finally identified and brought to justice thanks to advanced FGG DNA analysis,” said Sen. Cornyn. *“I’m proud to introduce this legislation in Carla Walker’s honor so that we can provide the resources needed to give more families in Texas and across the country the peace, healing, and resolution that comes through the power of a case solved.”*

“Advancements in forensic DNA technology have revolutionized our ability to combat crime. In Vermont, detectives were able to use forensic genetic genealogy analysis to help provide answers to a family who thought they might never come. We’ve also seen how this technology can be a powerful tool in giving those wrongly accused a chance to clear their names,” said Sen. Welch. *“Our bipartisan bill will help investigators across the country harness the incredible power of FGG technology to crack cold cases and deliver justice to countless victims and families, and I’m thankful for Senator Cornyn’s leadership on it.”*

U.S. Representatives Wesley Hunt (TX-38) and Eric Swalwell (CA-14) are leading companion legislation in the House.

Background:

Typically, when a suspect’s identity is unknown, a crime laboratory uploads the genetic material recovered from a crime scene into the FBI’s national database to search for DNA matches between the forensic sample and any known offenders. While this traditional form of forensic DNA profiling only examines 13-20 Short tandem repeat (STR) DNA markers, forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) technology examines over half a million Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) that span the entirety of the human genome. It does so by cross-referencing shared blocks of SNP markers to identify relatives of the genetic profile by uncovering shared blocks of DNA. This enables criminal investigators to build family trees that ultimately help determine the sample’s identity and solve cases.

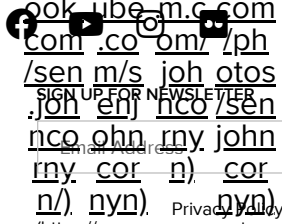
Carla Walker was abducted from a bowling alley parking lot in Fort Worth, Texas, on February 17, 1974. Her body was found three days later in a drainage ditch just 30 minutes south of Fort Worth. The Fort Worth Police Department was able to collect a few forensic samples and clothing items from the crime scene, but law enforcement could not solve the murder due to limited forensic technology at the time. Carla’s brother, Jim Walker, never stopped searching for answers and nearly 50 years later, FGG DNA analysis was conducted on the last remaining DNA on a piece of Walker’s clothing, which led to a successful DNA match with the McCurley family and ultimately identified Glen McCurley, Jr. as the killer, who confessed in 2021 and died in prison on July 14, 2023.

Sen. Cornyn's *Carla Walker Act* would create a pilot program to make this cutting-edge technology and FGG DNA analysis more widely available to investigative agencies to:

- Aid in resolving previously unsolvable cold cases;
- Assist in the identification of criminals;
- Seek justice for previously unidentified victims;
- Help exonerate wrongly accused suspects;

• Aid in identifying the perpetrators for the victims' loved ones.

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