



Carla Walker Act

Introduced in the Senate by: Senators John Cornyn (R-Texas); Peter Welch (D-Vt.)

Introduced in the House by: Representatives Kelly Armstrong (R-ND-At-Large); Eric Swalwell (D-CA-14)

Background:

A recent innovation, forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) technology complements traditional DNA profiling by significantly improving the probability of finding a DNA match compared to traditional methods. This technique can identify relatives of the genetic profile by uncovering shared blocks of DNA, enabling investigators to build family trees that help determine the sample's identity and solve cases. Where the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) has returned no results, FGG investigations provide a significant opportunity to solve crimes that have remained unsolved for far too long.

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, FGG technology examines significantly more Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNP). It does so by cross-referencing shared blocks of SNP markers with millions of people in public genetic genealogy databases.

Legislation:

The *Carla Walker Act* would create two \$5 million pilot programs to support FGG DNA analysis to help solve previously unsolvable cold cases. The grant funding in this legislation would make this cutting-edge technology more widely available to investigative agencies and help investigators better resolve previously unsolvable cold cases. The bill would also fund and implement a pilot program to fund forensic whole genome sequencing of genetic samples that have failed to lead to a DNA match.

Additionally, the *Carla Walker Act* would fund new technology and equipment to conduct forensic genetic genealogy to assist in identification efforts and seek justice for previously unidentified victims. The bill would also help exonerate wrongly accused suspects and bring closure for the victims' loved ones.

This legislation is named after Carla Walker, who was abducted and later found dead in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1974. The case unfortunately went cold due to the limited forensic technology at the time. FGG DNA analysis was able to identify Glen McCurley, Jr. as Carla Walker's killer. McCurley confessed to the murder in 2021 and died in prison on July 14, 2023.