



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Larkin "Missing Angels" Bill Passes Senate

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The State Senate today passed legislation (S.189-A) sponsored by Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) that would allow parents who have a stillborn baby to receive a birth certificate.

Known as the "Missing Angels bill," the legislation would have the Department of Health issue a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth. This new certificate would not serve as proof of a live birth, but would be an official government document issued to families to recognize the fact that they still experienced the birth of a child and allowing them to name that child.

"Several parents who have experienced the sadness of having a stillborn infant have told me that they wished they could have been given a birth certificate during that very difficult time," said Senator Larkin. "It would have helped them have some closure. I introduced this bill in the Senate to give grieving parents who must leave the hospital without their child the same consideration and respect given to those

fortunate parents who leave the hospital with an infant in their arms."

There are approximately 30,000 stillbirths in the United States each year. In fact, eight times as many babies are stillborn when compared to the number of babies that die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). It was estimated that SIDS claimed 22 children in New York State in 2004, while during the same period of time 1,784 infants were stillborn. Over 50% of stillbirths occur due to an "undeterminable medical reason." Further, the majority of stillbirths occur near or at full term. Stillbirth occurrences have no socioeconomic, age, race, lifestyle, or behavioral indicators.

The only official government document or acknowledgment of a stillbirth is a certificate of fetal death. Under current law, there is no official recognition to parents that there was a birth at all. Under the Larkin bill, a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth would be issued by the State of New York upon the request of a grieving parent. This document would provide recognition of the birth, and if requested by the parents, a name of the child would be recorded.

Larkin added, "It is also my hope that creating a this new certificate will help to increase awareness about stillbirth in this country and encourage more medical research for this issue."

The bill was sent to the Assembly.