

# Caylee's Law

By Reg P. Wydeven  
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When I was younger, I used to think I knew what worrying was. I worried about the first day of school. I worried about final exams. I worried about saying something moronic on my first date with my now wife (which, of course, I did). But I had no clue what worrying was until I had kids.

When my daughter fractured her skull after falling off the swing set, I was positively freaking out. While waiting for the cat scan results and the doctor's prognosis, I threw up twice and cried a lot. Thank God she inherited her father's thick cranium and she ended up being fine.

My buddy, Tree, also has a horrible worrying parent story. While shopping at Kohl's, he lost his daughter after looking at a Brewers t-shirt for about 6 seconds. In an utter panic, he started screaming at employees to seal all the exits to the store until he could call the police to get out an Amber Alert. Thankfully he heard a giggle from the middle of a circular clothes rack that made a great hide-and-seek hiding spot.

Every parent has experienced that nightmarish feeling of momentarily losing a child. Unfortunately, not every parent reacts like Tree by forming a search party.

Last week, Casey Anthony was acquitted for the murder of her two-year-old daughter, Caylee. Caylee was last seen on June 16, 2008, but Anthony didn't report her missing. Not until July 15 did Anthony's mother finally notify authorities that Caylee was missing.

Prosecutors claimed the delay severely hampered the search. In addition, by the time Caylee's body was eventually found, her remains had deteriorated, possibly destroying critical evidence.

The case made headlines for three years. The public closely followed the trial that painted the picture of Anthony as a 20-year-old mother that took her own child's life because she took too much time away from her partying. Therefore, it was no surprise that the not-guilty verdict generated unbridled outrage across the county and even spawned death threats against Anthony and her parents.

Instead of griping, one Oklahoma woman did something about it: she started an online petition on the Change.org website to pass what she coined "Caylee's Law." The petition, which collected nearly half a million signatures within days, called for states to pass legislation making it a felony for a parent, guardian or caretaker to fail to report a missing or dead child within 24 hours.

Listening to the cries of their constituents, legislators in numerous states have begun drafting bills to enact various incarnations of Caylee's Law. In Anthony's home state of Florida, Representative Bill Hager is working on a version of Caylee's Law that not only requires caregivers to promptly report a missing or dead child, but also to promptly report to law enforcement the location of a child's corpse if it is known.

Rep. Paul Wesselhoft proposed similar legislation in Oklahoma. He claims that the bill "probably won't be a deterrent to crime, but at least it's something the prosecutors can charge someone with who's violated the law. If this law was in Florida, Casey would have some more jail time to stand."

Wesselhoft's statement is in response to the incredibly brief jail time Anthony received as a result of the trial. While the jury cleared her of any culpability for her daughter's death, Anthony was convicted of several counts of lying to investigators. She is expected to be released on July 17.

It's a shame that we would ever need such a law. I just pray Caylee's Law never has to be enforced.

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