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House of Representatives

Kevin and Avonte's Law

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey...Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. GOODLATTE, for his enormous efforts and those of his staff to, out of an abundance of caution, address some of the issues that were raised by my friend from Texas. I don't think some of his concerns were included or at risk in the bill, but we clarified and made very clear about voluntary participation and the issue of noninvasiveness and nonpermanent, which is now clearly defined in the legislation. So it is an improvement. Mr. GOODLATTE was the one who came up with that language. The language that deals with the collection, use, and retention of data is solely for the purpose of preventing injury or death to the patient.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000, I cofounded two caucuses: the Autism Caucus and the Alzheimer's Caucus. I wrote three laws on autism, including the most recent Autism CARES Act, which not only provides \$1.3 billion for autism and research at NIH, CDC, and HRSA, but also looks at the aging out issue.

Law enforcement is not ready to deal with severely autistic children who, when you approach them, need a certain approach so that they don't react violently, especially if they have a sense of threat.

As my good friend and colleague from Virginia, the distinguished chairman said, about 50 percent of autistic children wander. We know at least 100 children since 2011 have died. The bill is named after two of them who drowned.

A benign tracking device that is noninvasive, there is no collection or use other than for the prevention of injury or death, and, of course, there is no national storage. If you ask, I say to my colleagues, your local sheriffs, your law enforcement about the lifesaving program, some have it, some don't. Within about one-half hour of an Alzheimer's patient or an autistic patient being lost, wandering, they find them. Those who are not found in 24 hours, not only have got a 50 percent chance of getting hurt themselves, but can hurt other people. About 60 percent of the Alzheimer's community wander at some point. This is a way of protecting and preventing injury.

I say to my colleague, my good friend from Texas, he is reading into the things that are not there. One of the groups put out an alert suggesting a vote against this and hadn't even read the clarifications out of an abundance of caution, again, put in there by Mr. GOODLATTE.

So I would hope that Members would support this. This will save lives. And we are not

reinventing the wheel. The Alzheimer's program was in effect without any parade of horrors occurring as a result.

I check with Alzheimer's patients all the time, Alzheimer's Association and, of course, Autism Speaks, and others who are all for this. They want this desperately because wandering is a serious problem.

We want to get our loved ones, find our loved ones who have developmental disabilities or

have Alzheimer's, and make sure they get back to a safe and secure environment as quickly as possible. That is all this does.

So I urge my colleagues to support it. I, again, thank the chairman. I thank Mr. CONYERS and others. This is a bipartisan bill. Senators GRASSLEY and SCHUMER sponsored it on the Senate side, Ms. MAXINE WATERS—it is the left, right, middle, everybody in between. This is about helping people who are at grave risk when they wander.