

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL



L-1-6
55 Elm Street
P.O. Box 120
Hartford, CT 06141-0120

Office of The Attorney General
State of Connecticut

**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING
JANUARY 27, 2009**

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 451, An Act Establishing a Silver Alert System. This proposal creates a Missing Senior Citizen Information Clearinghouse with the Department of Public Safety to provide a central repository of information and to coordinate public notification, using radio, television, internet, electronic billboards and other media.

We owe our seniors the gold standard in Silver Alert.

A Silver Alert system saves lives. Senior citizens with Alzheimer's Disease or forms of dementia can wander from their homes provoking frantic, frenetic searches. The Silver Alert system was brought to my attention by senior advocates who have encountered problems getting information to the public when a senior is missing. A central data bank and notice procedure are vital. Especially during the cold winter or inclement weather, the longer a person is missing, the greater the likelihood of harm.

A Silver Alert system is undeniably needed. More than 600,000 Connecticut residents are over the age of 60 years. About 70,000 residents have some form of dementia and 60% of them will wander from their homes.

Modeled after the highly successful Amber Alert system for children, a Silver Alert can quickly inform the public, the media, law enforcement and other agencies to provide critical assistance for a successful and safe return.

Currently, thirteen states have Silver Alert systems - Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas and Virginia. While the systems differ in scope and procedure, they are all highly successful. The actual number of alerts vary from state to state but budgetary impact has been minimal because most authorities use existing Amber Alert infrastructure.

I urge the committee to consider amending Senate Bill 451 to specifically link the Silver Alert to the Connecticut Amber Alert process which immediately broadcasts an emergency missing persons notice to all radio and television stations through the Emergency Alert System as well as to the 2,800 Connecticut Lottery retailers. The Department of Public Safety has years of excellent experience operating the Amber Alert system and can more cost-efficiently use this

existing process than create a new and separate system. I have attached draft legislation for the committee's consideration.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 451 with an amendment to link the Silver Alert system to the Amber Alert system.

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION
SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

TITLE: An Act Concerning a Silver Alert

SUMMARY: This proposal expands the current Amber Alert system for missing children to senior citizens with cognitive or developmental disabilities.

TEXT:

Sec. 1. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2009): The Department of Public Safety shall utilize the Connecticut AMBER alert system to notify the public of any person over the age of sixty five years who has been reported missing to the state or local police provided (1) the state or local police have verified the information contained in the missing person's report and (2) the missing person is (A) cognitively impaired; (B) a person with mental retardation; or (C) mentally disabled.