

LISA LIKEN MONROE
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IN FAVOR

Testimony on SB2098
State and Local Government Committee
Lisa Liken Monroe
January 16, 2025

Madam Chair and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding changes to the Silver Alert notification system as defined in Senate Bill 2098.

My name is Lisa Liken Monroe. I am the daughter of Lloyd Liken, a Vietnam War veteran who went missing on the evening of Thursday, November 16, 2023, after attending a church supper. The experiences I'm about to share with you have motivated me to become an advocate for expansion of the Silver Alert eligibility criteria.

The newspapers piled up at the front door of Dad's apartment were one of the first signs something was very wrong. My husband Chad and I found the papers when we went to pick up Dad for dinner and the symphony on the evening of Saturday, November 18, 2023. That evening was the beginning of five months of living hell for the two of us and our family and friends.

When we realized Dad was missing, one of our first actions was to request that a Silver Alert be issued. It was a devastating blow to find out he did not qualify because he did not have a medical diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's. We had recently learned law enforcement officers had helped him find his way home on two separate occasions, but even that did not qualify him for a Silver Alert.

When Dad told us he had received this assistance from law enforcement, he attributed it to problems with his night vision, problems that had resulted from injuries sustained while serving in Vietnam. We talked to him about the possibility that getting confused while driving was a sign of dementia, but he reassured us he was fine. He must have been in denial at that point, and he had never given us any reason to believe what he said to us was anything less than 100 percent true.

Soon after, we learned our concerns were valid. When Dad disappeared that Thursday evening, dementia was the obvious reason, but, as I mentioned, it had not yet been diagnosed by a doctor.

Without the Silver Alert to support our efforts, Chad and I and some friends began a desperate search, driving day and night, looking in all the places he might be likely to go. Then we reached out for assistance, and what was to become an aggressive search process was soon underway.

With direction from the Badlands Search and Rescue Service, dozens of volunteers panned out in the Bismarck/Mandan area, soon stretching farther out into surrounding counties and to specific areas of the state where possible sightings were being reported. Volunteers also reported in from Montana, South Dakota and Minnesota.

Shortly after the formal search began, we received some staggering news. In the early morning hours of Friday, November 17 – before Chad and I even knew Dad was missing – a McLean County deputy sheriff spotted him traveling southbound on Highway 83 near Wilton. Dad was driving slowly, but his driving was not erratic and, according to state law, did not provide justifiable cause for the deputy to stop him. It was difficult to learn about this “what if” moment, but it also was reassuring to know where he had been and, most importantly, that he was alive and well at that point in time.

Chad and I want you to know that law enforcement officers assisted in the search wherever and whenever possible. We greatly appreciate the assistance provided by many city, county and state agencies. I do, however, want to commend one office in particular. Even though McLean County is the largest county in our state, the Sheriff’s Office traveled every single road in the county, looking for Dad. As our team of volunteers continued to search, the sheriff assured us Dad was not in McLean County, and volunteer search efforts would be best utilized elsewhere.

And so the search continued. By car, by boat, by plane and using drones – we worked as a team to search every possible field, body of water, dead-end road or gully. Badlands Search and Rescue used mapping software to create a detailed search map that allowed volunteers to

opt in on an app. Badlands Search and Rescue then tracked and recorded the movement of these volunteers, ensuring our efforts were thorough, but not duplicated. Just counting the searches recorded on this app, our dedicated team of volunteers logged more than 15,000 miles, committing their own time and resources to finding Dad! This total of 15,000 miles does not include searches reported by many people who followed “Looking for Lloyd Liken” on social media, then paid close attention to their surroundings as they traveled in North Dakota and beyond state borders.

Our efforts also were supported by local media outlets that ran many stories about the search and billboards in the Bismarck area that raised awareness Dad was missing. Search volunteers posted flyers wherever they could find a bare spot on a business window in the towns they searched and in gas stations and convenience stores close to highways and the interstate.

Whether they were talking to a farmer or rancher met along a country road, to a rural family that answered a knock at the door or to a group of people at a local coffee shop – search team members were asked the same question over and over again:

WHY HASN'T THERE BEEN A SILVER ALERT FOR THIS MISSING MAN???

The answer was always the same. Sadly, he did not qualify.

Our active search continued into December until the point when Chad and I became concerned about the safety of the compassionate men and women who had given so much to help us find Dad. December, January, February, March and April – the winter stretched on, long and full of heartache. Our days were filled with “where” and “what-if” questions. If a Silver Alert had gone out, would Dad still be with us? We kept our sanity by developing plans to renew the search as soon as the weather allowed.

And finally one day, we got the answer we so badly needed. It wasn't the answer we wanted, but we would finally be able to lay Dad to rest. His frozen body had been found near his vehicle on April 14, 2024, when a farmer checked his fields in rural Wells County.

It would be easy to let this immeasurable grief take over our lives, but Chad and I are doing our best to follow Dad's example and live life to the fullest. We're also committed to fulfilling a promise we made to ourselves soon after finding out Dad was ineligible for a Silver Alert. That promise was to do everything in our power to broaden North Dakota's Silver Alert search criteria so that senior citizens like Dad do not fall through the cracks ever again and to do everything in our power to spare other families from the misery and grief Chad and I have endured.

Madam Chair and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thanks again for allowing me to share this experience with you. I respectfully ask you to vote "do pass" on Senate Bill 2098.

This concludes my testimony, but I will be available to answer questions.