

Dear Honorable Congressmen and Congresswomen,

I have to admit that I, like so many other Americans did not know who to write to when faced with a devastating realization of a tragic misuse of government provided information. A quick search online brought me to you. Let me share with you what is literally ripping my heart out right now.

On September 08, 2011 my 17 year old son Joshua Miller was killed in a car accident when he fell asleep at the wheel, crossed the center line, and collided head on with an oncoming truck. His death has tested the limits of our family's endurance as we strive to continue with a new kind of normal that has enveloped our lives. For the record, he was wearing his seat belt, he was not using his phone as it was found in his pocket, he was a good boy that attended church three times a week and was working hard to save enough money to buy some land where he could eventually become his dream, a farmer.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 I did what so many Americans do this time of year; I attempted to file our taxes online. The return was rejected because someone had already filed using one of the dependent social security numbers on my return. I contacted the IRS and was told that there was nothing I could do to resolve this except to file our return by paper and wait six weeks to twelve weeks for a response. They also would not tell me who had used one of my children's SSNs nor could they even tell me which one had been used. I expressed to the agent on the phone how horrible and sick I was feeling and that I suspected it was my son's SSN that had been violated in this way. Because of privacy concerns though, she could not disclose to me even the identity of my own child. She did however, probably against policy, recommend that I could use a process of elimination by removing my children one at a time from our tax return and trying to submit it again to see if it would be rejected. I did so and quickly found out that my suspicions were correct; it was my son whose SSN had been stolen. Out of fairness, the agent did tell me that it could have been a typo but this is hard to believe as the records are verified against the name submitted and must match or it will generate a different rejection error. The hardest part is that we are now left with the burden of proof and must submit documentation in writing to correct this situation. There is no information that will be shared with us, no knowledge as to if someone will be prosecuted for this terrible violation of our grieving process. This has re-opened wounds that run very deep and have left us having to fight to prove that the son we love beyond measure, the son that is now absent from his body and prayerfully present with the lord, our precious baby boy, is so much more than a money making opportunity for some lowlife con-artist. We have been robbed of our right to be left in peace to deal with the loss of our son. Who is to blame for this?

As it turns out, you are if you do nothing to change the laws as they are currently written. A quick search on the internet will show you that this happens all the time. Deceased children are an easy target for would be thieves because upon the death of anyone in this country the private records of the deceased immediately become very public. This includes the social security number as well as all other identifying information that a would-be-thief would need in order to steal a deceased person's identity. All an identity thief has to do is watch for death notices of any child that would be of value to them and then make a public records request to retrieve the information that will allow them to steal a dead child's identity. Once the information is in the hands of the criminal it becomes a race for them to file a fraudulent tax return before the parents are able to file their own valid one. If they file first, the parents are the ones that have to prove they are the rightful party to claim the child as a dependent.

Who will be the voice for my son? I can only write to anyone that will listen and beg them to take up this cause. Why would the social security number of a deceased person ever need to be public knowledge? Why can a parent not register with the IRS or Social Security Administration to not allow the disclosure of this private information? This has opened a chasm of realization that I rather naively assumed that once the record had been flagged as deceased with the Social Security Administration, which it had, that it would become flagged across all government agencies.

So now I will await a response from you. As an elected member of the Congress of our United States, what say you? What explanation can you give to me as to how our government actually fosters an environment where the criminal is right until someone comes along that says they are wrong? My child is being abused from the grave, and our government provided the information that is permitting it to occur. This is not ok.

Respectfully,

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