

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of House Resolution 340 to express the commitment of the House of Representatives in giving victims involved in missing persons and unidentified human remains cases a voice through advancing DNA technology.

The grief of loss of a loved one, particularly a parent's loss of a child, can only be surpassed by the endless torment of not knowing. When a loved one is missing, there is no finality, no way to begin the grieving process so that closure may eventually come and family and friends can begin healing. Going on, often hoping against hope, knowing the news they fear the most may come at any moment is a tormenting experience.

But with today's DNA technology, much of this burden can be removed. Over 6,000 samples of DNA evidence have been used to identify remains of missing persons; and with continued and increased funding, we can bring more justice to victims and peace to the families and friends.

Mr. Speaker, I further support the continued funding of DNA initiatives because of the incredible part DNA evidence has played both in determining guilt and protecting the innocent. Since 2002, over 200 wrongly convicted persons have been exonerated through DNA evidence, including death row inmates. In fact, just this weekend two incredible stories arose in the Baltimore area. On Saturday, September 22, prosecutors dropped all charges against a Baltimore man who had been held in a rape and assault of a 59-year-old woman just last month. This morning the Baltimore Sun newspaper reports that Baltimore County has solved their 18th DNA-evidence case, a rape investigation open since 1978. After 29 years, a victim will finally see justice.

Mr. Speaker, we can and must continue to fund advancing DNA technology because, although there has been much success, there remains much to do. Over 40,000 samples of biological evidence related to missing persons are in laboratories around the country ready for entry into DNA databases with the potential of identifying almost 40 percent of our missing persons. And although DNA backlog reduction grants have cleared more than 60,000 criminal cases, exonerating the innocent and identifying the guilty, the backlog level remains almost

unchanged. Police departments and prosecutors recognizing the benefits of DNA evidence have been trained in its collection and are using the technology more than ever before, which adds samples at the rate that the backlog is being cleared.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support continued DNA-evidence backlog reduction grants in identifying missing persons and to exonerate the innocent and to identify the guilty. We have seen what the technology can do, and we have the wherewithal to fund those activities. Justice demands that we view continued funding as a major responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.