

# Sandy Hook families plead to keep crime photos private

By **Ken Dixon** Updated 12:13 am, Saturday, June 1, 2013

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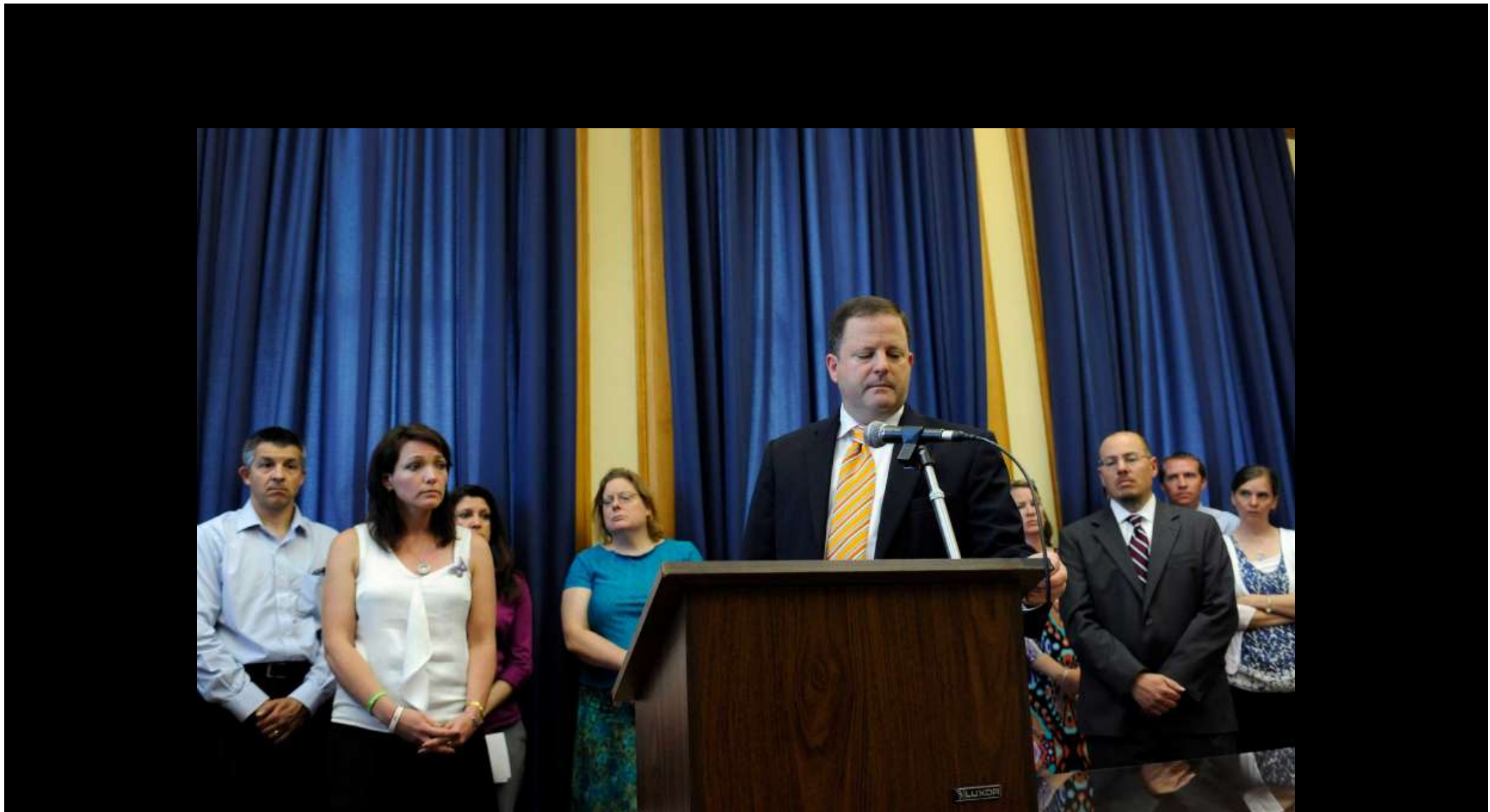




Photo: Jessica Hill, AP Photo/Jessica Hill



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**IMAGE 1 OF 9**

State Sen. Minority Leader John McKinney, R-Fairfield, and representing Newtown, answers questions from the media as families of victims from the Sandy Hook School shooting stand behind him during a news ... [more](#)

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HARTFORD -- In a last-ditch attempt to persuade lawmakers to keep gruesome crime scene photos and recordings out of the public domain, family members of the 26 murdered students and staff at **Sandy Hook Elementary School** came to the Capitol on Friday.

They met with House and Senate leaders and rank-and-file members, then held a news conference to oppose release of crime-scene photos because it would further the agendas of fringe bloggers and anti-gun activists such as filmmaker **Michael Moore**.

**Jennifer Hensel**, whose first-grade daughter Avielle was murdered, said she still has a duty to protect Avielle.

"Even if I could set aside the personal harm, I cannot stand the thought of seeing a graphic depiction of my child's death promoted to serve anyone's political purposes," she said. "I do not want my child to be collateral damage in a political death match."

But the privacy bill being negotiated behind the scenes by state prosecutors, Gov. **Dannel P. Malloy** and Senate Minority Leader **John McKinney** has stalled in the waning days of the **General Assembly** session.

McKinney, R-Fairfield, whose district includes Newtown, said he will continue to push for what the families want, including protection for Newtown Town Clerk **Debbie A. Aurelia**, who refuses to release death certificates for the 20 first-graders and six adults killed by **Adam Lanza** on Dec. 14.

"I'm optimistic that we'll do the right thing," McKinney told reporters in his Capitol office at the end of the families' news conference.

"We're still discussing it," said Speaker of the House **J. Brendan Sharkey**, D-Hamden.

**Dean Pinto**, of Newtown, whose son Jack was killed in the massacre, said the proposed legislation would clarify current law, which keeps autopsy reports private. He said while traditional news media would likely not publish or broadcast them after the investigation, others on the Internet and with political agendas would.

"I'm fully supportive of an open and transparent government, but I can't understand how distributing graphic photos of murdered teachers and children serves any purpose other than causing our families more pain," said Pinto, one of 20 Sandy Hook family members who visited the Capitol. "Instead, if these are released for the public, the only person who will learn is the next Adam Lanza."

He said that in addition to the photos taken of the dead at the scene, the families want to keep private the 911 recordings that came from the school as Lanza began shooting. He supported part of the bill that would release transcriptions of the calls, but not the recordings.

"None of us here want to hear gunshots and the screams of our loved ones as they perished, and frankly, I'm not sure how you can make an argument how hearing that in any way advances public policy," Pinto said.

**Gilles Rousseau**, whose daughter Lauren was a teacher killed by Lanza, said he has to protect her and the dead children from future harm, and stop future copycat crimes.

He said that family members have been under intense pressure from people around the country who call the killings a hoax by anti-gun advocates.

"For the life of me, I don't understand why, but the basic reason seems to be that by denying this massacre, you can ignore gun violence," Rousseau said, fighting back tears while detailing how the murder deniers have focused on Lauren. "She has become the tool of many crazy people out there."

Forty relatives of those killed sent a letter to Malloy and lawmakers on Friday asking that the photos and graphic information remain under wraps.

But the issue of the town clerk's refusal -- despite state law requiring the release of the death certificates, along with suppression of 911 recordings typically released under state Freedom of Information law -- are making it difficult for many lawmakers to accept the bill.

Another part of the bill would redact the names of young witnesses interviewed by investigators. Much of the information would stay private until later in the summer, when the investigation is closed and a final report issued.

**Colleen Murphy**, executive director of the state Freedom of **Information Commission**, said that the Legislature should beware of the potential precedent.

"I've said that whatever you do, be careful," she said in a phone interview. "There hasn't been a public hearing process and if you do something, make it narrow and do not drive a hole through the Freedom of Information Act."

kdixon@ctpost.com; 860-549-4670; twitter.com/KenDixonCT; facebook.com/kendixonct.hearst; blog.ctnews.com/dixon



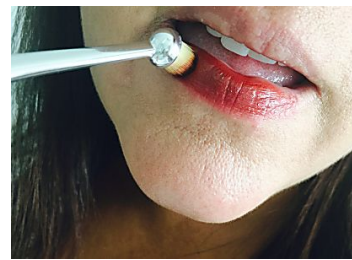
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