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By IKE MGBATOGU

Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – The jaw-dropping acquittal of Casey Anthony on charges of murdering her 2-year old daughter has stoked a rush by Florida lawmakers to pass a law requiring parents to report their missing children to law enforcement authority.

But, Florida is not alone.

Ohio and 12 other states are also racing to craft similar laws.

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In Ohio, State Representative Mike Stinziano from Columbus is leading the effort.

He is proposing a bill that would require parents to report their missing children to law enforcement authorities "within a reasonable period of time" or face felony charges. It would be called 'Caylee's law.'

"Our children are our most precious resources," said Stinziano, who serves on the House Judiciary Committee. "We need to make sure that our laws protect our children and that nothing like this can ever happen in the state of Ohio."

The main fillip for Stinziano's action came from furious members of his district who, like most people across the country, were left wondering what case the jurors were adjudicating.

The beginning of this tinderbox in 2008 was just as depressing as its conclusion.

Anthony, a 25-year old Florida mother, was on trial for murdering her two-year old daughter. The little girl's whereabouts became a troubling and deepening mystery in the face of an unfolding saga of too many unknowns. Anthony, for her part, did not report her daughter missing for 31 days, spanning the period from June 16, 2008, when she was last seen, to July 15, 2008, when she was reported missing by her grandmother.

But what's most mind-boggling to most folks is that during the period of not knowing where her daughter was, Casey went out partying and displaying a blasé demeanor unbecoming for a mother who lost her child.

Suspicion from family members and others began to surface.

The first harbinger that something was awry came when the little girl's grandmother sought to know Caylee's whereabouts. She was glibly strung along by Casey on a lengthy string of a concocted tale involving a phantom 'nanny' named 'Zanny' she claimed had little Caylee.

It turned out that was a lie.

There was no 'Zanny the Nanny,' whose real name is Zenaida Gonzalez. Rather, Caylee was murdered and dumped in a swamp near their home, where her decomposing body was later found six months after she was reported missing, following a futile nationwide search that failed to find her alive.

Taken together, it was a case, which from all angles and on the surface, looked as though the prosecution had it all secured in the bag, given what most people would consider a plethora of easy to see evidence against a fibbing Anthony.

But, apparently, most people were clueless.

Casey's smorgasbord of lies didn't matter. The jurors, for the life of most folks, acquitted Anthony on four major charges against her but found her guilty on four misdemeanor counts of lying to the police.

The lies netted her only four years in prison and then waived off because of the time she has already served. And just like that, on July 17, Casey will walk free.

But, that has not changed the minds of many who still strongly believe she murdered her daughter, including those here in Ohio who would not want that to happen in the Buckeye State.

Meanwhile, Ohio's current law do require that caregivers report incidents of missing children to law enforcement but Stinziano wants that law to be significantly beefed up.

"We need to ensure that we have laws with teeth, particularly in a case where a parent or caretaker is proven to have misled or impeded investigators," he said.

Mgbatogu is a freelance writer and editor of Onumba.com based in Columbus. He can be reached by email at Onumbamedia@yahoo.com

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