
(September 24, 4008) Southwest News Herald: Lipinski Bill Gives Legal Status for Turcinovic

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H.R. 5030, a bill introduced by Cong. Dan Lipinski (D-3rd) that would allow Corina Turcinovic to remain in the United States and apply for permanent legal residency, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 16.

The legislation, which unanimously passed the House Judiciary Committee in May, now moves to the U.S. Senate.

Lipinski's bill is the first private bill to pass the House in two years.

"This is a simple case of justice triumphing over bureaucratic errors," said Lipinski. "It has taken a lot of work, but the bipartisan passage of this bill reflects the unique circumstances surrounding Corina's case.

"I am very happy that the House passed my bill to start Corina on her way to citizenship. This is a long way from when Corina was headed to O'Hare Airport to be deported earlier this year.

"If not for the mistakes made by the government on her late husband's citizenship application, she never would have had to go through this.

"Ending this ordeal for Corina is now in the hands of the Senate. Bureaucratic red tape should not get in the way of justice, and today's action represents another significant step towards correcting those mistakes."

Turcinovic entered the United States legally in 1990 when her then-fiancé, Maro Turcinovic, was paralyzed after being hit by a car in New Jersey.

Maro was soon transferred to Chicago for rehabilitation care, and Corina - having been given permission by immigration authorities to stay and care for her injured fiancé - came with him.

Over the next 14 years, Corina would spend nearly every hour attending to the health needs of Maro, and in 1996, the couple married.

Maro was going through the process of becoming a naturalized citizen, but mistakes by the government prevented the process from being completed before complications stemming from Maro's injuries claimed his life.

Because Maro did not become a citizen prior to his death, Corina could not apply for permanent legal status under the

expedited procedures available to spouses and widows of U.S. citizens.

To help correct this government mistake, Lipinski introduced a bill on Corina's behalf on Jan. 16. On Jan. 22, last minute efforts of Lipinski, as well as Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren, played a critical role in stopping Corina's deportation as she was being driven to O'Hare Airport by immigration officials.

Upon introduction in Congress, private bills must follow special procedures, with outcomes that are far from certain.

Since 2003, only four of 236 private bills have passed both chambers and been enacted into law.