NASS
National Association of Secretaries of State

2012 MARGARET CHASE SMITH AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Deadline for Submitting Nominations: Friday, May 11, 2012

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of Nominee: John Walsh

Job Title (if applicable): Human and Victim Rights Advocate, Criminal Investigator, American Television Personality

Address: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
Charles B. Wang International Children's Building
Attn: Ann Schofield, executive assistant
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3175

Telephone (please include daytime and cell phone numbers, if possible): (703) 224-2150

Email Address: aschofield@ncmec.org

Short Description of Specific Acts of Courage/Reason for Nomination:

Following the abduction and murder of his six-year-old son Adam in 1981, John Walsh made it his life's mission to help missing and exploited children. He founded the Adam Walsh Resource Center to campaign for legislative reform, and it later merged with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. His lobbying efforts led to the creation of two federal acts that created national database on missing children and a 24-hour, toll-free hotline to report missing children or sightings. His television show, "America's Most Wanted," has helped capture 1,184 fugitives during its 25 seasons on air. The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act revised a national sex offender registration system and created tough penalties for sex offenders who did not follow procedures after their release back into society.

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nomination Submitted By: Ross Miller, Nevada Secretary of State

Address: 101 N. Carson Street, Suite 3, Carson City, NV 89701

Telephone: 755-684-5709

Email Address: rossmiller@sos.nv.gov

In addition to this form, please provide a separate statement or letter (approximately 600-1200 words) explaining your reason(s) for nominating this individual, including a detailed description of

how the nominee has demonstrated uncommon courage and/or exceptional character in pursuit of the common good. Emphasis should be placed on contemporary acts of courage, rather than examples from the distant past.

Please submit completed form and supporting nomination materials to the NASS office no later than Friday, May 11, 2012 via mail, e-mail, or fax to:

Stacy Dodd, NASS Executive Assistant
National Association of Secretaries of State
444 N Capitol Street NW- Suite 401
Washington DC 20001
PHONE: (202) 624-3525
FAX: (202) 624-3527
EMAIL: sdodd@sso.org

ROSS MILLER
Secretary of State

NICOLE J. LAMBOLEY
Chief Deputy Secretary of State

ROBERT E. WALSH
Deputy Secretary
for Southern Nevada

STATE OF NEVADA

OFFICE OF THE
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To NASS Members:

John Walsh of "America's Most Wanted" has dedicated his life to advocating for human and victim rights after a senseless tragedy struck his family. Despite this personal tragedy that forever changed his family, Walsh embarked on a crusade that would have profound impact on victims' rights and our country's policies related to missing and exploited children and those who commit such crimes. His 30-year career has been devoted to campaigning for human rights and harsher punishments for criminals, as well as assisting law enforcement agencies in capturing fugitives. For these reasons, I nominate John Walsh for the 2012 Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award.

Following the abduction and murder of his six-year-old son Adam in 1981, John Walsh made it his life's mission to help missing and exploited children. The police recovered Adam Walsh's severed head in a drainage canal more than two weeks after his abduction in a Florida Sears store, but the rest of his body was never found. After the crime, John and his wife Revé founded the Adam Walsh Child Resource Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to legislative reform. The centers opened offices in West Palm Beach, Florida; Columbia, South Carolina; Orange County, California; and Rochester, New York; and later merged with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), where Walsh serves on the board of directors.

The Walshes organized a political campaign, and despite many bureaucratic and legislative issues, their efforts eventually led to the creation of two federal acts. The Missing Children Act of 1982 authorized the FBI to enter and maintain relevant information about missing children in the National Crime Information Center, subsequently allowing federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to access the information. It was an important resource that law enforcement lacked to help them find missing children. The Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984 established the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, which maintains a national 24-hour toll-free missing children's hotline number (1-800-THE-LOST) to report a missing child or the sighting of one.

By the late 1980s, many malls, department stores, supermarkets, and other retails adopted "Code Adam," a process executed when a child is missing in a store. All doors are locked, and a store employee is posted at every exit, while a description of the missing child is broadcast over the intercom system.

NEVADA STATE CAPITOL
101 N. Carson Street, SUITE 3
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4786
Telephone: (775) 684-5708
Fax: (775) 684-5725

COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS
MEYER'S ANNEX OFFICE
202 N. Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4201
Telephone: (775) 684-5708
Fax: (775) 684-5725

LAS VEGAS OFFICE
555 E. Washington Avenue Ste. 5200
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101-1090
SECURITIES
Telephone: (702) 486-2440
Fax: (702) 486-2452
CORPORATIONS
Telephone: (702) 486-2880
Fax: (702) 486-2888

RENO OFFICE
500 Damonte Ranch Pkwy, Suite 657-A
Reno, Nevada 89521
Telephone: (775) 687-9950
Fax: (775) 853-7961

In 1988, Walsh secured a deal with Fox and launched “America’s Most Wanted,” a show dedicated to assisting law enforcement in apprehending fugitives. The show profiled fugitives wanted for various crimes, including murder, rape, child molestation, gang violence, and terrorism. “America’s Most Wanted” was the longest-running crime reality show in Fox’s history before its cancellation in June 2011. The Lifetime network picked up the show shortly after the Fox cancellation, allowing it to broadcast its 25th season in 2012. “America’s Most Wanted” has helped law enforcement capture 1,184 fugitives to date, including 15 from the FBI’s most wanted list and the convicts known as the “Texas 7” who escaped from a maximum-security prison and embarked on a deadly crime spree.

Famous kidnapping victim Elizabeth Smart referenced “America’s Most Wanted” when she took the stand in 2010, testifying that her captor Brian David Mitchell became distressed when he read a newspaper article that said “America’s Most Wanted” was looking for Smart. During his career, Walsh’s efforts have helped bring home more than 50 missing children.

President George W. Bush signed into law the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (also known as the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act) in 2006 after a two-year journey through Congress. The act focuses on a revised national sex offender registration system, tough penalties for not registering as a sex offender following release into society, child protective grant programs, and access by citizens to state websites that track sex offenders.

Law enforcement officials around the nation have recognized Walsh for his efforts. He received the 1998 U.S. Marshal’s Man of the Year award and the FBI’s highest civilian award two years later. The FBI also requested his help with the investigation of the Oklahoma City bombings. Walsh is the only private citizen to receive a Special Recognition Award by a U.S. Attorney General. Three presidents (Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton) have honored Walsh a total of four times in the White House Rose Garden. The White House asked Walsh to help Americans understand the war of terrorism following the September 11 attacks.

Currently, Walsh continues to testify before Congress and state legislatures on crime, missing children, and victims’ rights issues. His latest efforts include lobbying for a Constitutional amendment for victims’ rights. The Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Board of Governors presented Walsh with its highest Emmy honor in 2011. The Governor’s Award recognizes an individual, company, or organization that has made a substantial impact and demonstrated the extraordinary use of television.

John Walsh epitomizes the spirit of the Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award. Despite his personal loss, Walsh has demonstrated incredible selflessness in public service and devoted energy in is efforts toward making the nation a safer place for all individuals, specifically children who are unable to defend themselves, is admirable and worthy of recognition.

Sincerely,

Ross Miller