

Testimony of  
**Ms. Susan Fisher**

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In December of 1987, just a days before Christmas, my 28 year-old brother Ron Ruse was ambushed & shot in the back outside of his apartment in Carlsbad, CA.

Ron was murdered after being stalked for over a year by Linda Ricchio, a woman who had become obsessed with him. Ron had stopped dating Ricchio a few years before the stalking began. He had difficulty extricating himself from the relationship with Ricchio because his attempts to leave would always be followed by her manipulation of him with staged suicide attempts, public scenes meant to embarrass him and threats of violence against him and his friends and family. From the moment that Ron ended their relationship, Ricchio began to access personal information about him in order to track his whereabouts and to know who he talked to and who he spent time with.

She was easily able to get copies of phone bills and utility bills. She was able to trace Ron's fiancée and his fiancée's mother by accessing DMV information. Since that time, Congress has passed legislation to protect driver's license information. There are loopholes in the current law that still leave people vulnerable. Senator Feinstein's bill mandates that you must give consent before the information on your driver's license can be sold.

In mid-1987, Ricchio quit her job and stopped going to school in order to pursue Ron on a fulltime basis. She stalked him so relentlessly that she neglected everything else in her life; even letting her cats die of starvation inside her apartment. In November, Ron was compelled to get a restraining order in an attempt to protect himself and save his job. The San Diego County judge who issued the restraining order told him that he should be flattered by the attention. Ricchio's response to the order was to legally purchase a gun and to become proficient in its use, shooting at the head and crotch of a silhouette target.

In late November the daily contacts stopped. We learned later that Linda Ricchio had gone to San Francisco during that period, to visit her brother and to enlist his help in developing over 200 surveillance photos that she had taken of Ron. During that time Ron moved for the third time in 1987. He was trying to buy a little time, trying to decide what to do, and rapidly coming to the conclusion that there was really nothing that he could do if she decided to become violent. With her ability to track him down, he was convinced that even if he left the state, she would eventually find him using phone records or one of the other kinds of trails that we leave simply by living in the world.

On December 9th, after once again tracing his whereabouts, Ricchio rented the apartment next door to Ron without his knowledge. The two second-story apartments were separated by a privacy wall, Linda's at the back of the balcony and Ron's at the front by the stairs. On Monday, December 14th Ron went home from work in the dark, carrying a bag of groceries, keys and a

checkbook. He turned his back to the privacy wall and bent over to put his key in the door. At this point, Ricchio stepped out from behind the wall and shot Ron in the back two times, killing him.

At the time that my brother was killed there were no stalking laws in California. It was not new behavior by any stretch of the imagination; it was simply referred to as harassment or domestic violence. California was the first state to pass a law that specifically made stalking a crime. In the years following my brother's murder, I have been very involved in advocating anti-stalking legislation in California and in working directly with stalking victims; in fact most stalking victims in San Diego County eventually find their way to the Crime Victims Bureau through referrals from law enforcement, DA's and counselors. While many things have changed, both in the criminal justice system and in the way that we view stalkers since my brother's murder in 1987, the pathology of stalking remains the same. We have recently an increased use of internet venues being used, particularly by domestic violence type stalkers to contact and harass their victims.

And while we have been able to legislate safeguards into many of the avenues of access that stalkers once used to obtain personal information about their victims, new avenues are opening up all the time. Stalkers often have a narcissistic, sociopathic, borderline personality. This type of person has the intelligence and the drive necessary to access any information available in order to track their victim, and would most certainly be willing to purchase information. Information on the internet that is not safeguarded is fair game.

Everyone should have the ability to protect themselves by protecting personal information about themselves. Senator Feinstein's Privacy Act of 2001 mandates the kind of informed consent necessary to do just that by providing that first, you must be notified if a company intends to sell your personal information, then it provides an avenue for you to stop that sale and it permits you to sue any company that misuses your social security number. This legislation gives individuals increased ability to protect themselves from those who would seek to harm them