

The Fresno Bee

Central California's Leading Newspaper

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CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY INSTITUTE

**Aaron Price Child Health and Welfare Scholarship
and Journalism Award**

Special reports on the death of Dustin Haaland

Publication: Jan. 23, Jan. 25, April 11, 1999

Nominee: Fresno Bee reporter Michael Krikorian

The discovery in January of a small child buried in a Central California vineyard was a tragedy for our region, as the discovery of any child in this manner would be. But as Fresno Bee reporter Michael Krikorian began uncovering the circumstances surrounding the death of 4-year-old Dustin Haaland, the case became even more tragic. The boy's death revealed gaps -- in this case fatal ones -- in a system designed to protect children.

The Bee would like to submit for judging three enterprise stories that investigated the death of Dustin Haaland and raised tough questions about a system designed to protect children in California:

Jan. 23, 1999

"Portrait of a Suspect: Haaland blamed drugs for his conviction on child abuse charges."

Jan 25, 1999

"Family, friends struggle to understand Haaland tragedy"

April 11, 1999

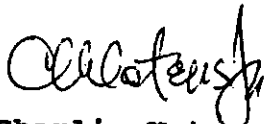
"How could this happen?"

Through public records requests and court orders, Krikorian discovered that Dustin's parents had been in jail for abusing their firstborn son, who was now in a foster home, and that Dustin's father even admitted to a judge that drug use caused his violent rages, and he pleaded to the judge for help. Despite conditions at home and the abuse of the older boy, Dustin was placed back in the custody of his mother. When his father was released from jail after serving his sentence for abusing his first son, he regained access to the family -- and to Dustin -- without detection by parole agents or Child Protective Services. Both mother and father have been charged with Dustin's murder. There is no law that requires Child Protective Services to be notified when an abuser is released from jail, so CPS says it had no way of knowing about the father's release or no way of protecting Dustin. After the story of Dustin Haaland reached the public, the community began pushing for change.

We believe that Krikorian's coverage of Dustin's death has opened the doors for reform in the system and challenged lawmakers to push for change. The stories are prime examples of good enterprise

reporting and public service to readers throughout our circulation area, and beyond. We believe this series of stories is an excellent candidate for the Aaron Price Child Health and Welfare Scholarship and Journalism Award.

As supporting material, we have included stories highlighting the continued effort by lawmakers to pass "Dustin's Law" and Bee editorials. The Bee's editorial board believes the Dustin Haaland case epitomizes the mismanagement of children's services by county and state agencies. In most cases, the children don't end up dead, but they often are physically and emotionally abused. But Dustin paid the ultimate price. Bee editorials attempted to focus attention on the gaps in the system that were brought out in Krikorian's stories. The editorials pushed for a "Dustin's Law" to protect other children, and the legislation is moving through the California Legislature. These stories and editorials are changing public policy in California.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Waters".

Charlie Waters
Executive Editor

The Fresno Bee

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPER FOR 76 YEARS

SATURDAY
JANUARY 23, 1999

PORTRAIT OF A SUSPECT

Haaland blamed drugs for his conviction on child abuse charges.

"I do need help for my drug problem so this or anything else won't ever happen."

— From a letter written by Douglas Haaland Jr. to a judge in 1995 before Haaland was sentenced for abusing his first child.

By MICHAEL KRIKORIAN

THE FRESNO BEE

A 1995 probation report on the parents suspected of killing their 4-year-old son and burying him in a Fresno vineyard describes extensive drug use by Douglas Haaland Jr. and details how he beat and abused the couple's first child.

Later that year, the couple was convicted of felony child endangerment, based on a November 1994



Douglas Haaland Jr.

incident involving their then-21-month-old son, Douglas. The boy's father received a 64-month prison term; the boy's mother, Kathy Haaland, was released on probation after 33 days in jail.

Haaland had been using methamphetamine for several months prior to the assaults on Douglas, according to the report, which was obtained by The Bee through a court order. "Haaland said he had not slept for eight days because he was snorting a lot of crack, and he ran out about three days before his

Please see **Haaland**, back page

HAALAND'S LETTER TO THE JUDGE

Text of a letter written in 1995 by Douglas Haaland Jr. to Superior Court Judge Gene Gomes before Haaland was convicted for felony child endangerment:

Dear Judge Gomes,

I want to start off by telling you that I'm sorry for doing what I did. I do need help for my drug problem so this or anything else won't ever happen. I've never been in trouble with the law before. I've been in jail 4 months now. I'm never going to forgive myself for what I did to my son. We all make mistakes and I made the biggest of all. I'm sorry for my bad handwriting. I'm not that smart. I know I did wrong sir. But I don't think I deserve to lose my son sir. I just need help so that way I can be a better father. Thank you for your time sir.

Sincerely,
Douglas Arthur Haaland
March 14, 1995

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arrest," the report says. "He said he was very agitated and irritated."

Police arrived at 2338 W. Fedora Ave. on the evening of Nov. 25, 1994, after receiving a tip that a child was being beaten there.

Upon arrival, police found young Douglas with bruises on his face and left ear, clumps of hair missing, a split lip, a bite on his arm and contusions on his torso, the report says.

According to the report, Kathy Haaland "had an excuse for every injury the officer asked about."

She said the hair was missing because they had tried some hair spray on the boy and that the bite was from a neighborhood dog. The bruises were from rough-housing with other boys and because "he's really clumsy," Kathy Haaland said.

After Child Protective Services workers arrived, officers arrested Douglas Haaland Jr. His wife was arrested one month later.

After Haaland was read his rights, he immediately confessed, the report says. "I did it. I have a drug problem. I need help," he told the officers.

Haaland said the incident began after he saw his son standing on the coffee table and told him to get down. When the boy didn't, Haaland became angry. Haaland "pinched his cheeks very hard, picked him up by his face and threw him to the ground," the report says.

Kathy Haaland told police she didn't try to contact authorities because "I wasn't sure what he would do to Dougie or me," the report says.

Haaland: Father blamed drug use

The Haalands were arrested Jan. 15 of this year in connection with the death of 4-year-old Dustin Haaland, whose body was found in a shallow grave in a vineyard. Authorities said Dustin was the victim of repeated child abuse.

Authorities said the younger Douglas was adopted and is doing well, according to Fresno County sheriff's detectives, who arrested the Haalands Jan. 15 in the death of their second son, Dustin.

Haaland moved back in with his wife and Dustin after he was released from Corcoran State Prison in June 1998. There is no state law requiring that a child welfare agency be notified when a convicted child abuser is released.

State law does require that communities be notified when someone with a severe mental disease is being released from prison and could put the community at risk. And a federal regulation commonly known as Megan's Law requires notification when a convicted child molester moves into a community.

"Given the circumstances under this case, I believe we ought to seriously look at that," said Sal Montana, director of the county Department of Children and Family Services. If such a notification had been made in the Haaland case, Montana said social workers could have "checked to see if she [Kathy Haaland] had the ability to protect the kid and whether she was strong enough to know what to do if abuse started again."

■ Bee staff writer Karen McAllister contributed to this report.

The Fresno Bee

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPER FOR 76 YEARS

MONDAY

JANUARY 25, 1999

Family, friends struggle to understand

Haaland tragedy

Couple suspected of killing their son were known for their love of babies.

BY MICHAEL KRIKORIAN
THE FRESNO BEE

Douglas Arthur Haaland Jr. and Kathy Elaine Sawyer had a common passion as youngsters growing up in Fresno: their affection for babies and toddlers.

"Doug Junior was very loving, very warm toward my baby," said Elizabeth Estrada, who lived near the Haalands in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

When she met Haaland, Estrada had just given birth to her son, Matthew, who is 12 now.

"He would take care of him," Estrada said. "I trusted him with my baby."

Kathy Haaland's sister had similar thoughts.

"Kathy just loved to be around babies," said Tammy Oge, a certified nursing assistant. "She liked to be around younger kids, too. She was very loving toward anyone's baby."

As loving as the two may have been toward other people's children, by the time they became adults and had their own children, something went terribly wrong.

When the couple's first child, Douglas, was 21

months old, his father picked him up by his cheeks and threw him down. Police arrived at the home and saw the battered boy. His arm was bitten, his ear swollen, his lips split. His torso was covered with bruises.

In 1995, the father was sentenced to prison for felony child endangerment. He served 28 months. The mother did 33 days in jail and got probation.

Now, family and friends are struggling to understand what went wrong with Douglas Haaland, 25, and Kathy Haaland, 23, who are in the Fresno County Jail, suspected of beating to death their second child, 4-year-old Dustin.

Please see **Haalands**, back page



Douglas Haaland Jr. has a history of being a child abuser.



Dustin Haaland's battered body was found Jan. 12.



Kathy Haaland is a suspect in the death of her son Dustin.

Haalands: Friends, family members recall the Fresno couple's struggles

Continued from Page A1

"I don't know what happened," says Douglas Haaland Sr., the suspect's father. "It's hard to fathom."

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Though criminologists say many child abusers come from abusive homes, Haaland's father adamantly denied that was the case.

"No, I never had to hit him," Haaland Sr. said. "Dad's bark was feared worse than his bite. My tone of voice was sufficient to carry the day."

Still, Estrada's daughter, Mary Fey, said the Haaland household was far from a television sitcom family.

"It wasn't exactly 'Father Knows Best' over there," Fey said. "I'm not saying Doug Senior didn't try to be a good father, but I know they had their problems at that house. I know he was really into his career."

Sometimes the younger Haaland would seek refuge from his home and spend a night or two at Estrada's residence on Hampton Way.

"Our place was a getaway for him," said Fey, 26. "Doug was like a little brother to me."

"He was a funny little ham, him and my brother," said Fey, a saleswoman in Fresno. "They would put on these skits with the video camera."

The boys' favorite routine with the video camera was to imitate Robin Leach, the host of television show "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

"'Champagne wishes and caviar dreams,' that's what they would say in that guy's accent," Fey said, laughing.

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When Douglas Haaland Jr. was growing up on Buckingham Avenue in Fig Garden, one of his closest friends was Fey's brother, Carlos Cortez.

The two met during summer school at Fort Miller Middle School. The boys discovered they lived around the corner from each other, and a friendship was born.

"He was constantly over at my house," said Cortez, who now lives in Las Vegas and manages a pizzeria.

The boys were into playing football and basketball — not the organized variety, but pickup games in parks and school fields, on streets and driveways.

During that time, the Washington Redskins were a powerhouse in the National Football League. Haaland worshipped the team, which won the Super Bowl in 1983 when he was 9 and in 1988 when he was 14 years old.

"He liked all sports, but he loved the Redskins," said Haaland Sr., a legislative consultant in Sacramento.

Young Douglas had a Redskins sweatshirt. Redskins football cards. A Redskins blanket. His favorite player was John Riggins, the Redskins' powerful fullback.

Ten years after Haaland watched his gridiron idols win in 1988, another Redskins sweatshirt, a gift to his son, would help lead to his arrest.

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For the first 13 years of her life, Kathy Elaine Sawyer grew up in a home near Dakota and Hughes avenues, less than two miles from where her future husband lived.

When she was 2, her father and mother split up. Oge, her sister, said Kathy was never abused by her mother or her mother's second husband.

She attended Wilson Elementary and Cooper Middle School. Kathy liked to ride bikes and root for the 49ers. The sisters lost some contact with each other when Tammy moved out at age 16 to live with her father. The distance between them grew, a chasm that widened when Kathy met Haaland at

Fresno High School.

"When she started going with Doug, she kinda changed," said Oge, 25. "Her attitude was different. She would run away. Stay out all night. Never call to tell my mom."

"My mom didn't like Doug too much. Kathy wouldn't listen to her anymore."

Kathy dropped out of school as a ninth-grader, the same year Haaland dropped out as an 11th-grader, their family said.

A few years later, the couple had a baby. They named the infant Douglas, after his father and grandfather.

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By then, however, friends suspected Douglas Haaland was doing drugs.

They were right.

He started smoking marijuana in the ninth grade, then moved to methamphetamine when he was 20 years old. He quickly developed an \$80, 1 gram-a-day habit.

In a 1995 probation report, Haaland explained how he would obtain money for the drugs.

"I would borrow money. I would loan out my car for money. And I would get it sometimes for free."

The trust Elizabeth Estrada once felt for Haaland, trust that led her to let him stay in her house, to carry her baby, vanished about the time baby Douglas was born.

She had \$800 in cash in her home. The money disappeared.

"He stole that money from me," she said. "It really hurt."

The next day, a friend told Estrada he saw the Haalands shopping at the mall.

A short time later, Haaland visited the Estrada household again. He was no longer welcome. Haaland was told Estrada did not want him coming around anymore.

"He sat down on the curb and started crying," Estrada said. "I'm not talking about whimpering. I'm talking about just sobbing. I felt really bad, but no one comes into my house and steals my money."

"I think he was probably heavy into drugs by then, and I just didn't want him around," she said. "It was disappointing the way his life turned out."

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In May 1993, when baby Douglas was 3 months old, he suffered a fractured skull. The parents were not charged with a crime in that incident. However, the county's Child Protective Services agency took Douglas out of his parents' household and placed him with his aunt, Tammy Oge.

Several months later, the boy was back with his parents.

Then, in November 1994, 21-month-old Douglas was badly beaten. Ten charges of willful child endangerment were filed against the parents.

Haaland admitted he had hurt the child, blaming his drug habit. He said he had experienced eight consecutive days without sleep when the attack occurred.

"I did it," he told the police who investigated the report of child abuse. "I have a drug problem. I need help."

In September 1995, Douglas Haaland Jr. plead guilty to two counts of 273D of the penal code, which reads in part: "To willfully and unlawfully inflict cruel and inhuman corporal punishment and inflict injuries resulting in a traumatic condition upon a child."

He was sentenced to 64 months, and did his time at Norco and Corcoran prisons.

Kathy Haaland was convicted of one count of 273A of the penal code, which reads in part: "To permit a child to be inflicted with unjustifiable physical pain and mental suffering."

She was sentenced to counseling, parenting classes and probation.

The abused boy was placed in foster care and was eventually adopted.

Today, he is doing well, detectives said.

The beginning of Haaland's prison term marked the start of an extended estrangement between him and his father.

"He never discussed the incarceration," Haaland Sr. said. "But in trying to put a silver lining on the situation, I was proud that he stepped up and accepted responsibility for his actions."

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On Jan. 12, farmworkers found the battered and bruised body of a little boy in a shallow grave in a west Fresno vineyard.

Like so many other Valley residents, Estrada heard the news.

"I thought to myself, 'How could anyone possibly do that?'" she said. The thought of killing a young, defenseless boy sickened her. The next day, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department released to the media that the child was found wearing a Washington Redskins jersey.

The calls started coming in.

"You don't see that many Redskins fans out here," said sheriff's spokesman Dan Cervantes.

The tips led police to the parents, who were arrested at Oge's home, where they had been living since Christmas Eve.

The couple had told the Oges that Dustin was visiting his grandfather.

"They had acted like everything was normal," said Jimmy Oge, Tammy's husband.

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At the request of investigators, Dr. Venu Gopal, the pathologist who performed the autopsy, has declined to reveal the specific cause of Dustin's death.

The Coroner's Office has said the death was typical of "fatal child abuse syndrome," a term used when the child has had a series of previous injuries before the fatal injury.

Formal murder charges have yet to be filed against the couple because investigators want to bolster their case with such evidence as DNA tests, the District Attorney's Office said.

Normally, authorities have 72 hours after an arrest to charge suspects or they must be released.

However, since the incident put Douglas Haaland in violation of parole and Kathy Haaland in violation of probation, the two can be held in custody.

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Oge stood in the doorway of her home on East Harvey Avenue and talked about what a happy little fellow her nephew was.

"Dustin was such a good boy," she said. "If they didn't want Dustin, they could have called me and I would have taken care of him. I just don't understand what happened."

Her own 3-year-old boy came to the door and asked whether anyone would like to watch "Barney" with him.

Oge looked down and slowly shook her head.

"Dustin should be watching cartoons right now," she said.

Her thoughts drifted to the living nephew she once helped raise.

"You know, I wish I knew where Dougie was," she said. "I'd like to be in contact with him. Even if his new parents didn't want me to see him, I'd sure like to see a picture of him. Just to see him."

"I know I can't see Dustin anymore."

The Fresno Bee

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPER FOR 76 YEARS

SUNDAY
APRIL 11, 1999



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION
BY JOHN ALVIN
THE FRESNO BEE

Douglas and Kathy Haaland went to prison for abusing their first child. The system to protect children from repeated abuse failed, their second son, Dustin, found buried in a vineyard. They are now suspects in his murder.

How could this happen?

BY MICHAEL KRIKORIAN
THE FRESNO BEE

Dustin Haaland was 4 years old, just a smidgen over 3 feet tall and 40 pounds. Too young and too small to get through this life without someone to watch over him.

But nobody did. And he wound up dead.

His battered, soiled body was found Jan. 12 buried in a shallow grave in a west Fresno vineyard. He had suffered months of physical abuse until his fragile, defenseless body could take no more.

Three days later, the two people who should have been his vanguard in life, his parents, Kathy and Douglas Haaland Jr., were arrested in his murder.

Dustin's extended family — including his aunt, uncles and grandparents — say they could do nothing to rescue him from the brutality. They say they were kept from the couple in what they call a sinister game of deception. They say the parents distanced themselves from the family, that they didn't know the boy was in trouble.

Editorial.
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Meanwhile, there are troubling questions whether various watchdog agencies, which had previous dealings with Douglas and Kathy Haaland's vicious pattern of abuse, failed Dustin.

Douglas Haaland had spent 21/2 years in Corcoran State Prison for beating his first son, Dougie, and he admitted the violence was fueled by his serious drug problem. Kathy Haaland had been convicted for not reporting the abuse.

Douglas Haaland was released from prison just six months before

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Dustin: Everyone who should have protected him didn't

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Dustin's death and placed on parole, like more than 100,000 felons in California. Among the conditions: Stay away from all minors, with the exception of those approved by his parole agent, and attend a yearlong program for abusers.

Although the parole agency responsible for ushering Haaland back into society kept him on a leash, it was a leash he easily stretched into forbidden territory — the Fresno apartment where Kathy and Dustin lived, a place where Dustin was alone with the two ex-convicts.

Children's Protective Services, which moved Dougie into foster care after he was beaten, eventually allowed Kathy to retain custody of Dustin.

"I asked CPS one question," says Doug Haaland Sr., Dustin's grandfather. "Who wrote the plan that removes one child from the home of abusive parents and lets another child stay there?"

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The last time social workers had contact with the Haaland family was in September 1996, according to CPS.

After Kathy Haaland served 33 days in jail in 1995 for failing to report the abuse of Dougie, she entered Evangel Home, a Christian emergency shelter and program for homeless women and children. The shelter, in central Fresno, specializes in helping women coming out of jail or prison. While the majority of women stay briefly, there is a long-term program available to those who show a commitment to better their lives. Kathy Haaland showed that desire and spent nine months in the program.

During Kathy's stay, Dougie was adopted by another family. Dustin would occasionally visit the shelter accompanied by CPS workers. During that time, Kathy convinced CPS she was able to take care of Dustin, and he was returned to her once she got her own apartment.

CPS was not aware Douglas Haaland had been released from prison because there is no law that requires a prison or parole agency to notify a child welfare agency when a convicted child abuser is released.

State law does require notification if someone with a severe mental illness is released from prison. And a federal regulation known as "Megan's Law" requires notification when a convicted child molester has moved into a community.

If community notification had been made in the Haaland case, Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services director Sal Montana says social workers could have "checked to see if [Kathy Haaland] had the ability to protect the kid and whether she was strong enough to know what to do if abuse started again."

She wasn't strong enough, authorities say, and they believe the combination of Kathy and Douglas was lethal for Dustin.

Without Douglas around, Kathy managed all right. "From all indications, Kathy Haaland was a good mother, when she was alone," says Fresno County Sheriff homicide detective Joey Amador, co-lead investigator on the case.

But when Dustin needed to be shielded from his father, authorities say she did nothing.

"She stood by and let this happen," Amador says. "She needs to be held responsible. This was a case of continued abuse, not just one bad day."

As for Dustin's extended family? Authorities say his aunt, uncles and grandparents did nothing to ensure that Douglas Haaland stuck to the conditions of his parole.

"I cringe a little when I hear some people say the family should have done something," says Doug Haaland Sr., a political consultant in Sacramento. "What could I do? When two people set out on a deliberate path of deception, what can a family do?"

"I cringe a little when I hear some people say the family should have done something. What could I do? When two people set out on a deliberate path of deception, what can a family do?"



— Doug Haaland Sr., on the death of his grandson, Dustin



JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE

After Kathy Haaland spent time in jail for not reporting the abuse of her first son, Dougie, she spent nine months at Evangel Home, a shelter for homeless women and children. Her second son, Dustin, was returned to her when she moved into her own apartment. She is now a suspect in his murder.

By 1995, when the Haalands were sentenced for the attack on Dougie, their relationships with their families had grown strained and distant.

Douglas' father and brothers and Kathy's sister — their closest relatives — say they rarely saw the couple. Kathy's family didn't even know the phone numbers for Douglas' family.

"We absolutely feel badly," says Doug Haaland Sr. "But I didn't think he was in danger. Hindsight is 20/20. I didn't even know where they lived. There is not one of us in this family that have not been used by this pair who played a monstrous game of deception."

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When Douglas Haaland Jr. was released from Corcoran, local parole authorities — who handle about 80 cases each — did not place him high on their list of potential powder kegs.

He slipped behind parolees who had longer or more sinister criminal records. In a state dripping with hardcore convicts on parole for murder, a father who slapped, pushed, hit and bit his son wasn't considered a high risk.

Haaland was released from prison June 11, 1998, and placed on three years' parole. Almost immediately, authorities say, he disdainfully rejected the terms of his parole:

■ He was ordered to attend a weekly batterer's treatment program — Safe Alternatives For Families Environment — for one year. But he stopped attending the classes; authorities say they aren't sure when.

■ He also was ordered not to be alone with any minor without prior approval from his parole officer. Haaland told authorities he was living at his younger brother Larry's home, where he met with his parole agent. But as soon as those meetings ended, he returned to 1070 E. Griffith Ave., Kathy's apartment building.

"I think Larry is taking this the hardest of everybody in the family," Doug Haaland Sr. says. "He feels bad that he was used. These two used a lot of people."

The California Department of Corrections parole division that handled Haaland admits communication was poor.

"We checked on him, but not quickly enough," says Jim Miller, district administrator of Fresno-area parole officers. "I think both us and them [the

batterers program] need to communicate. We didn't do that. ... Let's just say nobody feels good about this."

Miller says the parole officer faces no disciplinary action in the case.

There is no state policy regarding how often agents should check on parolees.

"That kind of communication is supposed to be ongoing and typically it works, but once in a while, someone gets away from us," says Hank Peralta, operations administrator for the state Department of Corrections. "It is the parole agent who is responsible for the parolee. Even if you have an agreement [with counselors], you still have to be checking."

The director of the SAFE program says communication with other agencies is good.

"If someone misses a class, we notify parole or probation within 24 hours," Jerome Lanagin says.

He would not comment specifically on whether the parole department was notified after Haaland began skipping classes.

Miller says he believes Haaland started missing classes in either late November or early December, but he isn't sure.

"We don't do weekly checks," Miller says. "We do periodic checks, maybe once a month or so. It varies. We have parole agents that handle 80 people. We do the best we can."

A large number of parolees don't need supervision. They may have stumbled, had one major foul-up in their otherwise law-abiding lives. Some parolees with more extensive criminal records, however, are more likely to be on the road to San Quentin.

Haaland fell in the middle. He was a convict who had abused his first-born son and, in a 1995 letter to Superior Court Judge Gene Gomes, blamed drug

use for his violent behavior.

"I do need help for my drug problem so this or anything else won't ever happen again," Haaland wrote. "I'm never going to forgive myself for what I did to my son."

Part of the problem, authorities say, is there is so much churn in the prison and jail systems.

"The sheer volume of people to be checked on is so incredible that even the most conscientious investigator or agent has to prioritize," says Capt. Tom Gattie of the Fresno County Sheriff's Department.

Miller says that in Fresno County, as of March 1, there were 3,480 people on probation with 45 agents assigned to them, or about 77 cases per agent. Statewide, there were 112,730 people on parole, according to the Department of Corrections. Watching over them are 1,200 parole agents, 280 agent/supervisors and 188 supervisors.

"Each parole agent handles between 70 and 80 cases," the highest caseload the state has ever seen, Peralta says. "It used to be about 53 cases. The smaller the caseload, the better. But it is not overwhelming at 80."

Officials say it's easy to look back and see what went wrong in this case: a lack of communication among parole agents, counseling agencies, Children's Protective Services and family members.

"A lot of people didn't communicate," says Sgt. Jose Flores, head of the Fresno County Sheriff's Department homicide unit investigating the murder. "We know what went wrong. But we are going to fix it. We are not looking to blame anyone. We are looking for solutions."

Says Gattie: "This is a classic Monday morning quarterback situation. After the fact, it's easy to say, 'We should have seen this coming.' The ca disturbs us all."

Notification or not, visits or not, classroom attendance or not, there is only so much the system can do, some officials say.

"It doesn't necessarily mean if he missed his classes, he would have killed the kid," says Grant Jordan, director of the Parole Outpatient Clinic, a similar counseling program in Sacramento. "He could have made every appointment and killed the kid anyway."

Flores agrees: "The ultimate people responsible for the death of Dustin are the parents."

Kathy and Douglas Haaland Jr. had two sons within 17 months, Dougie and Dustin.

When Dougie was born Feb. 6, 1993, it was cause for celebration. The teen-age couple, who even as adolescents revered babies, were ecstatic. They were starting their own family and it was their chance to raise a child the way they wanted.

In the beginning, their life seemed like a fairy tale. Two misunderstood, star-crossed teen-age lovers — he was 19, she was 17 — entering the fascinating world of adulthood. No worried mother to tell Kathy when to come home, no strict father to lay down the law on Douglas.

They isolated themselves with their child. But having children doesn't solve problems for adults with problems, and Douglas had a big one: an \$80-a-day methamphetamine habit.

Soon they realized having a child wasn't all about friends saying, "Ooh, he's so cute" and "Look, isn't that adorable?" Having a baby was work. It disrupted sleep.

Most of all, along with love, having a baby demanded patience. But Douglas' drug of choice took away patience like a fire swallows oxygen.

Methamphetamine, and even more so, the lack of it, made Douglas irritable. His son, like many toddlers, wouldn't always listen to him, so his father would get upset.

Violently upset.

When Dougie was 4 months old, his skull was fractured. The parents said it was an accident, and no charges were filed.

By the time their second son, Dustin, was born July 6, 1994, family life was a drug-infested nightmare. Sometimes a tweaked-out Douglas would stay awake for a week at a time without so much as a nap. And true to its street name, the drug made him extremely cranky.

In December 1994, when he was 22 months old, Dougie did not obey his father when he was told to get off the coffee table. Douglas lifted the boy by his cheeks and threw him down. He then bit, hit, slapped and kicked his son, according to court records.

When the police came, Kathy had an excuse for every injury, calling her son a "very clumsy boy."

Douglas and Kathy were arrested, charged and convicted of felony child endangerment.

The Haalands had lost their first son. But they still had Dustin, and they would have a second chance.

When Douglas moved back in with Kathy and Dustin, it didn't take long for his violent ways to flare up again, according to authorities. For months, Dustin went through a living hell, suffering more abuse, including a fractured arm, they say.

Christmas Eve, the Haalands went to the east Fresno home of Kathy's sister and brother-in-law, Tammy and Jim Oge. The Haalands told them Dustin was visiting his grandfather, Douglas Haaland Sr.

During the evening, family members say, Kathy and Douglas got on the phone.

"Is Grandpa treating you good?" they asked into the receiver. "Are you getting a lot of presents?"

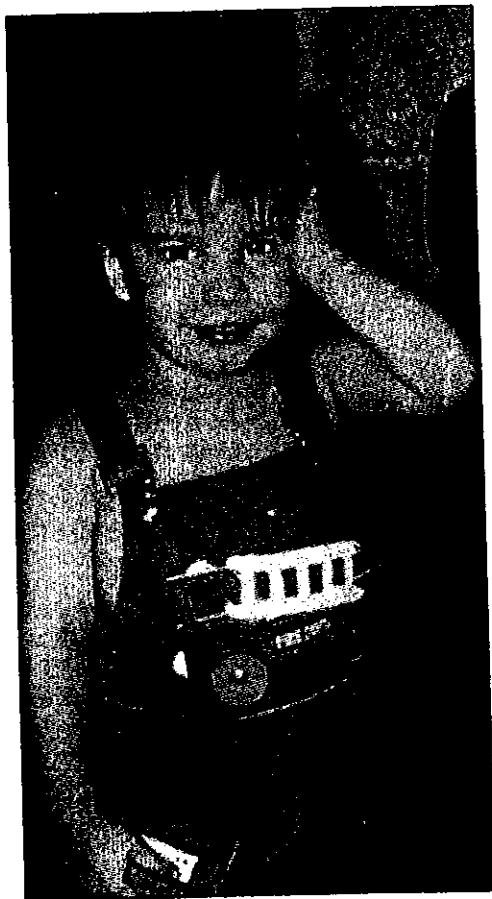
But they weren't talking to Dustin.

Authorities believe Dustin already was dead.

Three weeks later, farmworkers found his body.

□

Although they have yet to be charged with Dustin's murder, Kathy and Douglas Haaland remain behind bars



SPECIAL TO THE BEE

Dustin Haaland was born 17 months after his brother, Dougie, who was abused by his drug-addicted father and eventually taken from his parents. Dustin was found buried in a vineyard, his parents suspected of his murder.

"This is a classic Monday morning quarterback situation. After the fact, it's easy to say, 'We should have seen this coming.' The case disturbs us all."

— Capt. Tom Gattie of the Fresno County Sheriff's Department

— he at Wasco State Prison for a parole violation, she at the Fresno County Jail for a probation violation in connection with the 1995 attack on Dougie.

In addition, they have been charged with welfare fraud. Douglas, in a red jailhouse jumpsuit, and Kathy, in green, were in court Thursday for a preliminary hearing, but it was delayed until April 23.

Having the Haalands in custody gives investigators the luxury of not having to hurry to build a murder case against the couple.

"We are waiting for a few things, including the DNA results," says detective Ruben Fuentes, co-lead investigator on the case with detective Amador. Testing for genetic information from blood, hair and clothing can take several months.

□

In light of Dustin's death, various agencies are discussing ways to better communicate.

"We've had some good meetings [with SAFE] and they are going to be reporting to us differently," Miller says.

Instead of calling, SAFE will now send a fax to the parole offices when a parolee misses an appointment, hard proof that a class was missed.

"We are still looking at the process, of other ways to communicate with [CPS] and other agencies so we both can be a little more on the same page," Miller says.

When a Haaland-type offender is released, Miller says, the parole division is considering notifying CPS so the agency has the option to open a case and monitor the situation.

The Fresno case has attracted attention in Sacramento, according to local lawmakers, but no legislation has been introduced that would tighten laws

about paroled child abusers.

Some, however, advocate new legislation, "Dustin's Law."

"Given the circumstances under this case, I believe we ought to seriously look at that," Montana says. "Any time we can get information that would cause us to intervene, I'd like to have that to, at a minimum, check it out."

Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, says: "We need to have an administrative solution. If not, we will look into a legisla-

tive solution."

The legislative solution has backing in Fresno.

"If it requires new legislation," Flores says, "we, the Sheriff's Department, are going to propose it. There is 'Megan's Law.' What needs to happen is 'Dustin's Law.' ... The Department of Corrections and parole need to notify local CPS, probation, law enforcement when an abuser is released."

Such a law would require various agencies and potential neighbors to be notified that an abusive adult has been released into the community, Flores says.

Although the idea for a Dustin's Law is tempting, a legislative aide for state Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, suggests that before any such law is proposed, a study should be done to see if it could be implemented.

"It sounds nice, but if you just increase the number of mandatory things to report, they may just get put in a pile and get prioritized with all the other things," aide Larry Sheingold says. "It will be something they get to when they can."

"You go into any CPS office and ask anyone if there are enough people versus number of cases, and they will just shake their heads."

□

March 7, the Haalands' third son, Sean Evan Haaland, was born.

But as with Dougie and Dustin, there was no celebration.

Three hours after Sean was delivered at University Medical Center, CPS lifted the infant out of the arms of his jailed mother and took him into its custody.

If anything, Sean's birth is a cause for reflection, a call to examine what apparently went wrong in the Haaland household.

"We have to think about the third son," Gattie says. "We can't do anything for Dustin now, but we can for the new baby."

Eventually, 5-week-old Sean may learn about his parents. Maybe he'll learn about the brother he'll never meet and hear how Dustin was such a happy boy, so quick with a smile.

His aunt, Tammy Oge, who saw the newborn at the hospital, will surely tell him.

"Sean kind of reminded me a little of Dustin," she says. "It made me happy. We want to make sure what happened to Dustin doesn't ever happen again. Maybe Sean'll get the chances Dustin never had."

■ Bee staff writer Karen McAllister contributed to this report.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

- Including stories highlighting action taken
after the stories printed
and Bee editorials

Dustin's Law on path to approval

Child advocates raise concerns about their role once they learn of a parolee's location.

BY MIKE LEWIS
BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

SACRAMENTO — California prisons would have to notify local child welfare agencies when a convicted child abuser is paroled into the area under a proposal approved unanimously by a state Senate committee.

However, after debate of "Dustin's Law" and the 5-0 vote by the Senate Public Safety Committee, representatives of child protection agencies raised concerns about what case workers should do and what their legal liabilities are if given a parolee's location.

Frank Mecca, a lobbyist for the County Welfare Directors Association, said he worries that additional notification mandated by the proposal will generate public expectations that are impossible for child protective services to meet.

"What do we do when we get this information?" Mecca asked. "We don't walk a beat. We can't move a social worker in."

Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, wrote Senate Bill 1199 and named it after Dustin Haaland, the 4-year-old boy found in a Fresno vineyard Jan. 12. His father, Douglas Jr., has been charged with murder. His mother, Kathy, has been charged with failing to stop a murder and helping to cover it up.

The case spurred public attention and raised concerns about welfare agencies' ability to monitor and stop child abusers.



UNP

Controversial rocker Marilyn in Fresno and other dates



Marilyn Manson fans — calling themselves, from left, Spiral, Mazzy, Kayla and Angi

Suicide story sets tone for e

BY MARK GROSSI,
FELICIA COUSART MATLOSZ
AND MICHAEL BAKER
THE FRESNO BEE

Lee Ann Eager paused long enough to stop herself from sobbing Tuesday at the Fresno City Council meeting before she made everyone else in the room cry.

She had about 275 other people

arguments about shock-rocker Marilyn Manson and his influence on young minds — especially the two teens suspected in last week's shooting rampage in Colorado.

Many in the audience stood to argue that the city should dump the Manson concert, which was scheduled for May at Selland Arena. The hearing was held hours before Manson announced that he

Back page

Dustin: Costa's proposal is approved by state Senate panel

Continued from Page A1

Existing law requires the Board of Prison Terms or the Department of Corrections to notify the district attorney and either a local sheriff or police chief upon the release of inmates who served time for violent felonies. Dustin's Law would extend the notification to child welfare agencies when the felony includes child abuse.

Mecca, who called the measure a good "first step," said it puts child welfare agencies in an awkward position. Under

statute and practice, child protective services is a response agency. Case workers investigate only after allegations of abuse.

Short of a new abuse complaint, child protective services can do little if simply informed of a parolee's whereabouts, Mecca said.

"Do they have to act? Are they civilly liable if something happens?" Mecca asked after the hearing. "I support the bill. Having more information always is better than less."

But it does raise some questions." Sal Montana, Fresno's director of Children and Family Services, agreed. Montana said he supports Costa's proposal as an initial effort to prevent cases like Dustin's, whose father had a history of abuse.

Fresno County child welfare officials weren't notified when Dustin's father was paroled from prison after serving time for beating his other child. But Montana added, it is unclear what social workers could have done with the infor-

mation under existing legal limitations. "Right now, if we got that information and no order that the [parolee] had to be out of the home, there isn't much we could do," he said. "Remember, when he is released, there is no specific allegations except that [the parolee] has returned home."

The bill also is designed to notify a victim's family that a convicted child abuser has been paroled into an area. Costa said he was pleased the bill passed. The Senate Appropriations

Committee will debate the bill in coming weeks and evaluate its potential fiscal impact. Costa said he would work with the bill's co-author, Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, who proposed a similar law.

The Assembly Public Safety Committee is scheduled to hear Briggs' Assembly Bill 1689 May 11. Slightly different from Costa's measure, Briggs' bill is undergoing language changes this week.

Ultimately, both lawmakers expect to merge the bills.



Manson: Rocker cancels Fresno date

Continued from Page A1

and an access to guns," Manson said. "I hope the media's irresponsible finger-pointing doesn't create more discrimination against kids who look different."

Hours before the official announcement:

■ Band members' 10 hotel

no news of any cancellation. Yet by midday, concert sponsor and radio station KFRZ (103.7 FM) broadcast that the May 4 show at Selland Arena would not happen.

City officials and band promoters said they had discussed throughout the day the possibility

community that has said they've had problems with it. Also, it's probably a good thing for the promoter, so he doesn't lose any more money. It's a good outcome for everybody."

But Manson's promoter said Tuesday night, "We potential could be out of a lot of money."

Local News



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THE FRESNO BEE • WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1999

Committee OKs 'Dustin's Law'

Provision to reopen child-abuse cases is dropped.

By MIKE LEWIS
BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

SACRAMENTO — The state Assembly Public Safety Committee approved a version of "Dustin's Law" Tuesday but forced backers of the measure to drop provisions that would have required the state to reopen hundreds of child-abuse cases.

The measure passed on a 5-0 vote. Under legislative rules, it must move to a

budget committee by Thursday or wait until next year.

Using the strict deadline as leverage, lobbyists for Child Protective Services caseworkers gave the bill's author, Assemblyman Mike Briggs, a choice: With the help of sympathetic lawmakers, they would stall Assembly Bill 1689 until it was too late to pass this year or Briggs could accept their proposed changes and see his bill move ahead.

The Fresno Republican chose the latter

option. By Thursday, he must remove language that would have forced Child Protective Services to reopen and monitor each abuse case when a convicted child abuser is paroled from prison.

Child Protective Services lobbyist Frank Mecca argued that the provision gave overloaded caseworkers the impossible task of opening hundreds of new cases. He said the bill's muddy legal language didn't make clear the caseworkers' responsibilities in monitoring those reopened files.

The bill is named after 4-year-old Dustin Haaland, whose body was found in a

Fresno vineyard in January. His father, Douglas Jr., has been charged with murder. His mother, Kathy, has been charged with failing to stop a murder and helping to cover up a murder.

Briggs' legislation will retain its two primary intents: California prisons must notify local sheriffs and child-welfare agencies when a convicted child abuser is paroled into an area, and immediate family members of the victims must receive the conditions of parole.

Policy analysts likely will add a

Please see B11, Page B2

Bill: Assembly panel approves 'Dustin's Law'

Continued from Page B1
mandate that caseworkers make a single, unannounced visit to the victim's home after an abuser is paroled. Regular monitoring won't be required, analysts said.

Briggs vowed to work with the bill's opponents. Mecca, a lobbyist for the County Welfare Directors Association, said he expected to iron out the disputed points.

"We don't have problems with the other provisions," Mecca said. "We were just concerned about what we were supposed to do with the notification and the monitoring."

After the changes, Briggs' bill should closely mirror Senate Bill 1199 by Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno. Costa's bill also is named Dustin's Law.

The Haaland case prompted sharp criticism of parole, Child Protective Services and Haaland family members who failed to forecast the events that led to Dustin's death. Douglas Haaland Jr. already had served time for felony child abuse when he was paroled to Fresno County.

Both bills still face votes in the legislative budget committees before moving to the Senate and Assembly floors. Without the disputed provisions in the Briggs bill, both are expected to pass.

Dustin's grandfather, Douglas Haaland Sr., testified to committee members Tuesday that he didn't want his grandson to have died in vain.

"Dustin's death is more than a story of tragedy. It is a story of a system that allowed two people to play a hideous and torturous shell game with his young life," testified Haaland Sr., who works as a legislative staff member.

Haaland Sr. told the committee he was unable to get information about his son from parole officials or Child Protective Services when he suspected his grandson's care might be going awry.

Chinatown planter get agency's approval

Improvements are the latest for an area bent on revitalization.

BY JIM WASSERMAN
THE FRESNO BEE

Fresno's 120-year-old Chinatown district, still working its long, hard road to revival, received another \$169,000 Tuesday to boost an emerging Tower District-like street ambience.

Voting 6-0, City Council members acting as the Fresno Redevelopment Agency gave the neighborhood's newest street make-over to Fresno's American Paving Co. The company submitted the lone bid of \$169,445 — 5.8% below the city engineer's \$180,000 estimate.

(Council Member Sal Quintero was absent for the vote.)

This summer, the company will build new street planters at four intersections where E and G streets cross Tulare and Kern streets. The planters, designed by Broussard Landscape Architects of Clovis, already are in place where F Street crosses

Kern and Tulare streets. "It's going to show for still here. We're still at Larry Yamada, president of Chinatown Revitalization and owner of Kiku Flor. "We're still trying to old downtown-type atmosphere. Pedestrian friendly."

Along with the plan approved Tuesday, city engineers also signed an irrigation system for E and G streets between and Kern streets to add date new trees.

During the 1990s, the off-downtown neighborhood mom-and-pop stores, restaurants and landmark Japanese Buddhist temple worked to pump new life into old streets.

With matching contributions from City Hall, many buildings including a 1938 city fire have been repainted and proved with awnings. The Police Department is at F Street substation.

The neighborhood also came home to a pair of festivals: the revitalization effort's Chinatown Jazz and the E Street Fair

Bonadelle: Fresno appeals

Continued from Page B1
the city will establish a two-year study along the proposed corridor to determine a fair price between the city and individual property owners.

City Manager Jeff Reid said the process, similar to those in other growth areas, is less susceptible to legal challenge.

Bonadelle, who has attended earlier public hearings on his request, was not present Tuesday during the 10 minutes it took to decide the issue. His son, John Bonadelle Jr. of Westcal Inc., attended but did not address the council.

Also not present was Bonadelle consultant Jim Logan, who also pleaded guilty last week to a

corruption charge. Landowner Jim McKelvey filed Logan, who has made presentations on the dynamics rezoning request.

Tuesday marked the council approval in eight on Bonadelle's rezoning.

His first approval, Sept. 15 on a 6-1 vote this year because he failed to live on promises to develop the land. Logan refilled the petition and argued to delay the land donation requirement.

As he was last year, Member Chris Mathys of the dissenting votes on rezoning questions. He Fresno has enough appeals. Council Member Dan I



JAY MATHER — THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Ernesto Zedillo and Gov. Davis greet each other in the Assembly chamber during the Mexico president's visit Tuesday.

Dustin tragedy spurs audit of social services in Valley

BY MIKE LEWIS
BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

SACRAMENTO — Hearing concerns about chronic communication breakdowns between agencies that monitor paroled felons and those that protect abused children, state investigators agreed Tuesday to examine Fresno and Tulare county services.

The audit, which comes at the re-

quest of Assemblywoman Sarah Reyes, will evaluate what laws govern the handling of child abuse and parole data; the responsibilities of state and local agencies, such as Child Protective Services and state parole in tracking cases; and communication among the groups.

Reyes, D-Fresno, told the Joint Legislative Audit Committee that the death of Dustin Haaland prompted her

request. The 4-year-old's parents, both with child-abuse histories, have been charged in connection with his death five months ago.

While Reyes acknowledged that better communication between protective services and parole might not have spared Dustin, it might save another child in the future.

"This isn't just about Dustin," she said. "It is about every child in the

state who might be in danger."

Authorities found Haaland's body in a shallow grave in a vineyard Jan. 12.

The sensational case prompted sharp criticism of parole, child protection and the Haaland family who, social workers say, failed to report that the child's recently paroled father was living with Dustin and Dustin's mother in

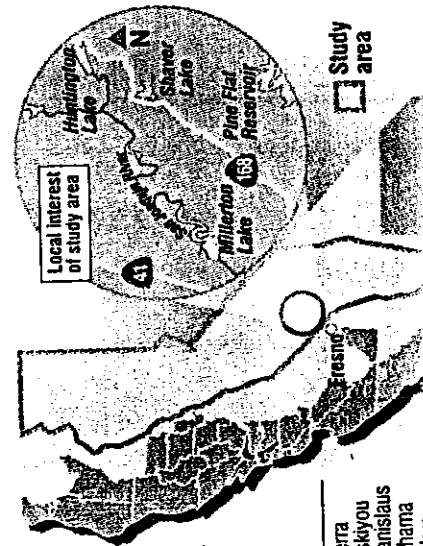
Please see **Safety**, back page

Sierra Nevada study area

Cabin owners around places like Huntington Lake are worried that the U.S. Forest Service study plan will include the removal of their homes.

Counties affected

Alpine	Mariposa	Sierra
Amador	Merced	Siskiyou
Butte	Modoc	Stanislaus
Calaveras	Monro	Tehama



Huntington cabin owners fear losing federal leases

BY MICHAEL DOYLE
BEE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — A Sierra Nevada study by the U.S. Forest Service is making California lawmakers and Sierra cabin owners nervous.

Huntington Lake cabin owners fear losing their Forest Service permits to own homes on leased federal property.

INSIDE

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Comics.....	E8-9	Notices.....	F11-12
Crossword.....	E9	Sports.....	D1
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lian for allowing racism and insensitivity flourish in the district. District administrators promised to immediately adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy after incident involving Pugh's daughter. To e, Pugh said, nothing has been imple-
ted.
George Finley, the NAACP's education
irman, said he first became involved with
tral Unified in 1996 when parents com-
ned of a Ku Klux Klan exhibit at a mid-
school.
district human relations commission was
ed, but nothing was accomplished, Fin-
aid.
When the heat got off of them, they
ped the committee," Finley said.
hunny Nelum, president of the NAACP in
o, is concerned but cautious.
had their word [last month] that things
be cleaned up, and it seems we are
g off to a bad start," Nelum said.
e NAACP is investigating to see if it is
lover of other racist acts that have
ed. We were promised by Superinten-
George Keledjian that these types of
would not be tolerated. . . . If anything
is changed, I'll take him to task."
djian said this month that his meeting
elum was "productive."
do have problems, but we are on top
n," Keledjian said. "We are not going
ble to do it in one hour, one day or
nth. It is a long process, but we will
mediately and work on it diligently."

MARY A. LOMMORI — THE BEE
Carol Bennetts defends her use
of two books pulled by Laton
school officials.
lard and Roosevelt high schools
in Fresno Unified School Dis-
trict, according to Sandra Car-
sten, assistant superintendent.
Hanford, Tulare and Visalia
high school officials say they
have no intention of banning the
books at their campuses.
Board members said it is possi-
ble the review committee's deci-
sion at the end of the summer
may mean more books will be
pulled from the core curriculum.
The books might be approved
for classes, approved for only cer-
tain grade levels, or only put on
the library shelf.
The book was taught last year
without incident.

Safety: State inquiry follows death of Dustin Haaland

Continued from Page A1
violation of his parole.
Dustin's grandfather and
family spokesman, Douglas
Haaland Sr., has said he was
stymied by authorities when he
tried to learn the terms of his
son's parole and, thus, he
didn't know that his son was
forbidden from contact with
Dustin. The child's father,
Douglas Haaland Jr., had been
paroled to Fresno County after
doing prison time for the felony
abuse of his other son.

The audit, which is expected
to take about three months at a
cost of \$81,290, isn't akin to a
grand jury investigation into
criminal wrongdoing. Rather,
the Office of the State Auditor
studies laws governing a system
and decides whether they work
or whether regulations were
followed.

Officials in Tulare and Fres-
no counties said they support
the study.

"Assemblywoman Reyes is
well-motivated," Tulare County
Supervisor Bill Sanders said.
"We are open to any kind of
audit they want to do."

Catherine Huerta, the assis-
tant director of the Fresno
County Children and Family
Services Department, also wel-
comed an audit. Calling the
Haaland case "absolutely trag-
ic," Huerta praised any effort
to improve communication.

But Huerta also openly won-
dered whether better communi-
cation could have helped Dus-
tin, whose father is accused of
lying to parole agents to hide
his true living arrangements.

Haaland Jr. "had a family
that was protecting him,"
Huerta said. "What law can
change that?"

Two years ago, at the request
of Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno,
the state auditor studied Kern
County's Child Protective Ser-
vices and found problems in the
way the system tracked cases
and compiled data.

In Fresno and Tulare coun-
ties, the new audit's focus will
be different: Building on the
Kern County study and using
statewide caseload information,

"It is about every
child in the state
who might be in
danger."

— Assemblywoman
Sarah Reyes, D-Fresno

the audit will attempt to deter-
mine where communication be-
tween agencies routinely
breaks down. It also will exam-
ine whether parole, protective
services and other agencies can
better coordinate data so poten-
tially dangerous situations can
be anticipated.

State Auditor Kurt Sjoberg,
told the committee that he
wants information gathered
and reforms suggested to apply
statewide.

Reform isn't limited to the
audit. Bills in the Senate and
Assembly would require the De-
partment of Corrections to no-
tify social workers when a child
abuser is paroled to an area
and to allow a family member
to have access to parole infor-
mation.

The bills are expected to
pass.

SETTING IT STRAIGHT

■ McLane High School's
graduation is scheduled for 8
p.m. June 2. It was reported
otherwise on Page B2 of
Sunday's Bee.

■ It is the Bee's policy to
acknowledge errors promptly.
Mistakes should be called to
the attention of the editors in-
volved.

Local news..... 441-6330
National, world 441-6463
Business..... 441-6329
Life/Weekend..... 441-6177
Sports..... 441-6340
Ombudsman..... 441-6193

WARM WEATHER
Warm weather has cotton growers optimistic about their planting season.
BUSINESS C1



RICKY WILLIAMS
Ricky Williams is the focus of several teams in the NFL draft.
COLUMNIST MILO F. BRYANT, SPORTS D1



VINTAGE DAYS
Hootie & the Blowfish, surprised by their own success, headline Fresno State's Vintage Days.
WEEKEND E1



HIGH: 88 LOW: 54
DETAILS: WEATHER, B6



FRIDAY
APRIL 16, 1999

50 CENTS

The Fresno Bee

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S LEADING NEWSPAPER FOR 76 YEARS

Briggs, Costa push proposals for 'Dustin's Law'

Laws would require that authorities be notified when a convicted child abuser is released from prison.

BY MICHAEL KRIKORIAN
THE FRESNO BEE

In a pair of bills inspired by the tragic case of 4-year-old Dustin Haaland, two Fresno lawmakers are demanding that local authorities be notified when a child abuser is released from prison. The proposed laws by Assemblyman Mike Briggs and state Sen. Jim Costa would require

that the state Department of Corrections notify local law enforcement and county Child Protective Services when a convicted abuser is released or paroled.

Both lawmakers said their efforts were driven by the case of Dustin, whose body was found in a Fresno vineyard Jan. 12. The boy's parents, Douglas and Kathy Haaland, are being held in connection with the boy's death.

Briggs, a first-term Republican, said a story about Dustin in Sunday's Bee and a chance meeting with Douglas Haaland's father combined to convince him to draft the legislation.

Dustin's parents were convicted in 1996 of child endangerment involving an older brother,

Dougie. According to court records, Douglas struck the child and Kathy failed to stop or report the abuse.

When Douglas was released from prison in 1998, he violated the terms of his parole by staying with Kathy and Dustin and by failing to attend a treatment program, authorities say.

Costa said he has amended one of his existing bills to include a requirement that law enforcement and Child Protective Services be notified whenever a convicted child abuser is released from prison.

"This won't bring Dustin back," Costa said of Please see Dustin, Page A10

"This won't bring Dustin back. But if my bill becomes law ... [it will] red flag more cases that pose the greatest danger to kids."

— Jim Costa, whose bill would require that authorities be notified when convicted child abusers are released



Governor
walks a tightrope

3 killed at Mormon library

Refugee

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Dan Quayle also broke the fundraising barrier, as did former Democratic Sen. Bill Bradley. Gore's lone challenger.

Elizabeth Dole, former head of the American Red Cross, and former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander trail Forbes in fund raising among top GOP contenders.

Spokeswoman Juleanne Glover Weiss said Forbes didn't begin raising money for his campaign until this month, after the deadline for reporting.

Among the expenditures Forbes reported was \$254,000 for polling.

Forbes' ability to finance his campaign allows him to reject federal matching funds and the spending limits that accompany them. The fear

never he spent \$1 million on his campaign. McCain reported raising \$1.8 million and transferred another \$2 million from his Senate campaign fund. He spent \$1 million and had \$2.8 million in the bank.

Bauer raised \$1.4 million, but ate most of that up by spending \$381,518. His cash on hand, \$489,367, is scarcely more than the debts the campaign owes, \$425,563.

Alexander reported owing \$212,405 and having just \$86,916 in the bank. He raised \$748,773 during the first quarter of 1999 and spent \$661,856.

Dole raised \$685,253 and spent \$108,210. She had \$578,042 in the bank.

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Dustin: Laws inspired by tragedy

Continued from Page A1
the changes to SB 1199, "But if my bill becomes law, we may be able to keep this kind of crime from happening to other defenseless children."

Costa said he hoped his legislation will "red-flag more cases that pose the greatest danger to kids."

Both bills aim to tighten communication among CPS, parole authorities and relatives of the abused children. Authorities have said breakdowns in communication among these groups may have placed Dustin in harm's way.

Briggs said he is calling his legislation "Dustin's Law." It is styled after Megan's Law, a federal regulation that requires local notification when a sexual molester is released into a community.

Briggs said he ran into Doug Haaland Sr., a legislative consultant, on a Sacramento-bound Amtrak train Sunday. They be-

gan discussing The Bee story about Dustin.

As the train made its way north, Briggs and Haaland scribbled out "Dustin's Law."

"It was almost like fate that I ran into Doug Haaland on the train," Briggs said. "I was really touched by the story. At first I didn't want to politicize someone else's tragedy, but Doug and I got to talking about it and what the solutions could be."

Bill gains support

Briggs' and five Assembly members co-signed the bill Thursday — Democrats Sarah Reyes of Fresno, Dick Floyd of Wilmington and Dennis Cardoza of Merced, and Republicans George House of Hughson and Roy Ashburn from Bakersfield.

Briggs' bill will be heard Tuesday in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

Reyes announced Thursday that she is working with Assem-

blyman Scott Wildman, D-Glen-dale, to initiate an audit of Child Protective Services statewide. Wildman is the chairman of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

Reyes cited Dustin's death as one of the tragedies that "highlight the systemic problems associated with the services we rely upon to protect victims of our most hidden and shameful crimes — child abuse and domestic violence."

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PatioWorld



straight road losses.

- Giants organization instructors stop by to see what they can do for the Grizzlies.
- Bill McEwen column.

and fireworks lit up the cool night during the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Joe Hart, director of concessions, said he expected to sell about 3,500 hot dogs, 2,000 cups of beer, 600 boxes of Cracker Jack and 1,000 bags of peanuts.

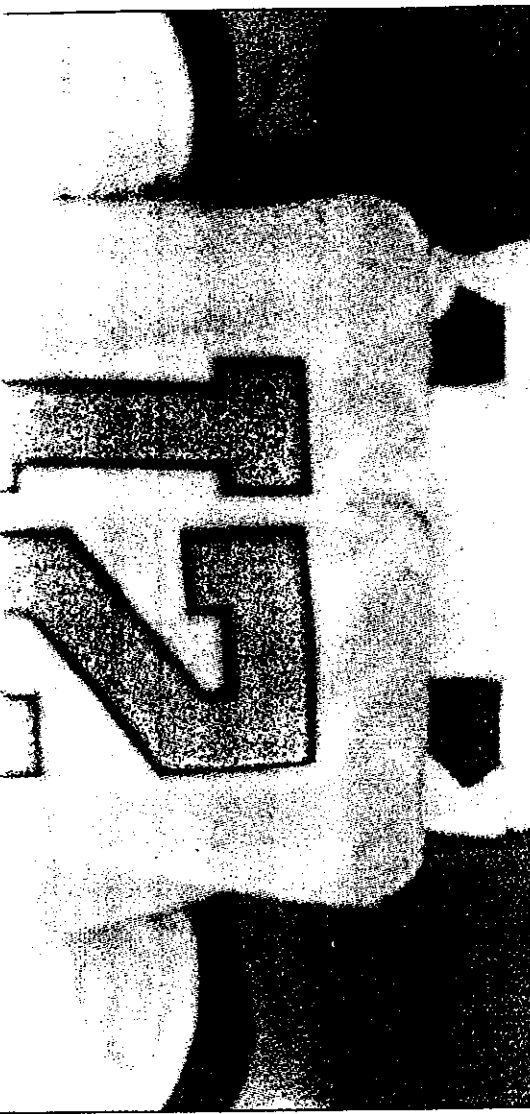
Gates opened at 6:30 p.m., an hour before Fresno State athletic director Al Bohl, state Sen. Jim Costa and former Grizzlies manager Jim Davenport threw out the first balls.

Most of the crowd was eager to get inside. But Rod Corless and his friends drank a few beers and had a tailgate party. A security guard told them tailgate parties are against the rules but allowed it anyway since it was opening night.

"We're trying to start a family tradition," said Corless, who took his daughter Natasha, 10, and son Rodney II, 5, to the game.

"It's un-American not to tailgate," Henry Elizondo said.

Please see **Grizzlies**, back page



Brett Guerra, 7, waits eagerly as Grizzlies outfielder Armando Rios autographs a baseball before Tuesday night's home opener against the Iowa Cubs at Beiden Field.

County's role in death questioned

By DONALD E. COLEMAN
THE FRESNO BEE

Her voice quivering with emotion and frustration, Fresno County Supervisor Sharon Levy questioned Tuesday how a battered child could fall through the cracks of county bureaucracy to his death.

"It has been haunting me, the tragedy of a 4-year-old boy named Dustin," the chairwoman told colleagues during the Board of Supervisors meeting. "Everyone failed

him. Whatever happened?"

Dustin Haaland's abused body was found Jan. 12 in a shallow grave in a west Fresno vineyard.

"Everyone says: 'We need protocol. We need state legislation,'" Levy said. "My God, all we needed ... was to sensitize whoever is in charge. I'm not just saying it's the government's responsibility. That family also let that 4-year-old boy down."

County Children's Protective Services workers had not made a

house call since 1996, despite the fact that Dustin's father — Douglas Haaland Jr. — spent 2½ years in prison for beating the couple's first son, Dougie.

Kathy Haaland, Dustin's mother, was jailed for not reporting that abuse. CPS moved Dougie into foster care, and he has since been adopted. Kathy retained custody of Dustin.

Both parents have been arrested
Please see **Levy**, back page

"Everyone let [Dustin] down, and I don't know where \$350,000 did anything to help that 4-year-old boy."



— Sharon Levy, Fresno County supervisor, asking how government grants helped authorities prevent the death from abuse of Dustin Haaland



TWO FAMILIES, ONE TRAGEDY

Flaming, head-on crash killed Reedley family of 4, mom from Visalia

By KIMI YOSHINO
THE FRESNO BEE

dent Judy Janzen, who Tuesday began making funeral preparations for her only son, Bill Janzen, 38, his wife, other cars carrying Street and relatives also crashed. A year-old daughter, Jordyn,

has ruled out deployment also vowed Tuesday as around Kosovo to st- ever humanitarian tect the refugees who eansing" by Yugoslav he extra troops also take part if NATO

across the Danube River from Belgrade, for the second time. The state news agency, Tanjug, said six NATO missiles also hit an oil depot and plastics factory near Pristina, setting a fuel dump ablaze.

Byron Todd hugs 3-year-old son Christopher before he and the 133rd Airlift Wing of the Minnesota Air National Guard join humanitarian efforts in Yugoslavia.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Y. Reedley family, Visalians die

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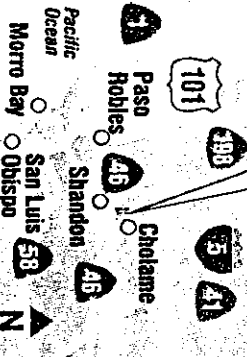
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Deadly crash
A fiery collision Sunday claimed the lives of a Reedley family.



THE FRESNO BEE

worse. Especially with kids, it's so tough."

In Reedley, relatives and friends — and in some cases even strangers — came bearing flowers and food to Judy and Franklin Janzen.

"That bouquet over there is from a lady that hasn't even met me," Judy Janzen said. "We've joined a club of grieving people."

Some say there are too many members of that club, too many fatalities on the "Blood Alley" stretch of highway between Paso Robles and the "Y" where 46 meets 41. Sunday's accident was

close to the place where actor James Dean died in a collision with a vehicle driven by a Tulare man in 1955.

After Fairbanks and his family were killed, capping off a year when 14 people died on the highway, area legislators and the California Highway Patrol launched a major safety campaign.

Drivers are required to use their headlights, even during the day. The California Department of Transportation installed "rumble strips" in the median and on the shoulders to alert people through vibration if they stray out of their lane. Plans are under way to convert the two-lane highway to four lanes, separated by a median.

And it's a double-fine zone for any misdemeanor traffic infraction, McConnell said.

"It's a highway that, unfortunately, people take for granted," McConnell said.

If the answers for Sunday's crash never come, Judy Janzen said she would take solace in knowing that her son's family is together.

"We have a very strong faith. They lived this life," she said. "Our family doesn't have to wonder, 'Are they in heaven?'"

Ley. Board delays request for more state grant money

Continued from Page A1
on suspicion of Dustin's murder, but neither is charged.

Ley's passionate inquisition — which included hand gestures to punctuate comments and questions — was followed by a unanimous vote to delay the county's pursuit of a \$40,000 state grant to combat domestic violence.

Instead of throwing more money at the problem, Ley and other supervisors said they want to know where the money has gone, especially the \$350,000 in state money received over the last three years to combat family violence.

"Everyone let [Dustin] down, and I don't know where \$350,000 did anything to help that 4-year-old boy," Ley said.

"We've already received the money. We've spent it. We've come up with plans. God only knows where those plans are. That boy is not here, but the plans are."

She asked that next week the county's Department of Community Health explain in detail how the money has been spent. Gary Carozza, director of

community health, called Ley's questioning "very fair."

He added: "We'll show the programs and what was accomplished with that money."

Ley said maybe it's time to evaluate whether the grant money is even useful.

"The important \$64 question is: What do we get after we've brought on staff?" Ley said. "We've accepted the money. We've matched the money. What do we have to show for it? Maybe it's time to start saying, 'If we're not going to get anything out of it, let's not take the money.'"

However, not all the other supervisors agreed with her approach to the grants.

Supervisor Juan Arambula said he was prepared to approve the application but deferred to Ley's request for an in-depth explanation of programs.

Arambula said: "We need to come up with a schedule so we can ask appropriate questions as to the effectiveness and accomplishments of programs."

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SETTING STRAIGHT

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In addition to installing new state... during a banquet Saturday night, the convention also provided members with several business workshops about federal benefits available to former POWs and their families.

Please see **POWs**, Page B2



who have died during the past year.

DIANA BALDI
THE FRESNO BEE

THE FIGHT TO STOP CHILD ABUSE

Push is on for 'Dustin's Law'

Bill: Mike Reynolds supports attempt to require child abuse convicts to register with authorities.

BY HANH KIM QUACH
THE FRESNO BEE

Mike Reynolds, creator of the "Three Strikes and You're Out" sentencing law, said he is throwing his support behind a bill from Assemblyman Mike Briggs that would help authorities keep track of convicted child abusers.



Mike Reynolds

The bill was inspired by the case of Dustin Haaland, a Fresno 4-year-old whose body was found in a vineyard in January. His parents, Douglas Haaland Jr. and Kathleen Haaland, are being held in connection with the slaying.

The legislation would require the state Department of Corrections to notify local law enforcement and county Child Protective Services when a convicted abuser is released or parole. Briggs, a Fresno Republican, has dubbed the bill "Dustin's Law." It is patterned after Megan's Law, which calls for agencies to be notified when sex offenders are released.

Doug Haaland Sr., Dustin's grandfather, called Reynolds Friday night to seek his backing.

Haaland and Reynolds became friends in 1994, when Reynolds was trying to pass the "Three Strikes" law. Haaland, a legislative consultant in Sacramento, helped with that effort.

"Having someone of Mike's standing supporting it is just important as any legislation,"

Please see **Dustin**, Page 1



PHOTOS BY JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE

Terry Williams coaxes her 9-month-old son, Kristopher Hawkins, to the finish line at Saturday's Race to Stop Child Abuse.

Race: Runners aim to raise awareness of child abuse.

BY HANH KIM QUACH
THE FRESNO BEE

These weren't your hard-core runners — but they had the makings.

Visors, T-shirts, running shoes — some with special shoelaces, those springy kinds that never come untied.

These hundreds of children, wearing an assortment of athletic gear, face paint and balloon hats, were competitors in a Saturday morning foot race — or wander — through Woodward Park.

The fourth annual Race to Stop Child Abuse, sponsored by the Fresno County Human Services System, attracted record-breaking numbers of competitors and sponsors this year.

Race organizers think that may be due

to a recent spate of crimes against children.

"I'd like to think that everybody felt as bad as we did, as helpless as we did," said Cathi Huerta, assistant director at Fresno County's Department of Children and Family.

The past year has been marred by several child tragedies:

■ On Jan. 12, 4-year-old Dustin Haaland's battered body was found in a shallow grave in a vineyard west of Fresno.

■ Later that month, the charred remains of three young brothers were found in a Fresno apartment set afire by their father. Police determined that they had been slain, probably by their father.

Please see **Race**, Page B5



One-year-old Jasmine Perez, held by guardian George Martinez, is fingerprinted by Clovis Police Explorer Cpl. Darrin Pock at Woodward Park.

Judge calls for action on Madera justice hall

BY CHARLES MCCARTHY
THE FRESNO BEE

MADERA — The Madera County Government Center, still scarred by a fire that occurred last summer, "resembles a NATO bomb site" and is "a crime scene waiting to happen," a Superior Court judge has warned.



Gall Hanhart McIntyre

Janet Gallagher agreed Friday. "We've run totally out of space."

The present situation is "an embarrassment to the entire community," Wieland told Hanhart McIntyre.

School woes go below the surface as a new Visalia bond vote nears

BY HANH KIM QUACH
THE FRESNO BEE

VISALIA — The smell of rotting wood, with its unfortunate similarity to the odor of vomit, slams into the nostrils and brings tears to the eyes. It's noticeable even 10 feet outside its source, a bathroom floor at Highland Elementary School. "Just like a roller coaster" is

IF YOU GO

What: A public forum about Measure G, sponsored by The Fresno Bee
When: 7 p.m. Wednesday
Where: Visalia Convention Center
Details: (559) 622-2408

School officials hope for a stronger solution to one of the most extreme examples of their

school. Even the district's harshest critics agree on the need for improvements. In fact, it's tough to find vocal opponents.

Former Visalia Mayor Ma Louise Vivier, who has worked to drum up support for the bond, said people who were skeptical seem to have changed their minds. Among them is Tom Fife, who vot

Local News/California

The Ng puzzle: Some

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA ANA — Who is Charles Ng? Baby killer or gentle philosopher. Tormentor of captive women or lover and caring friend.

In the final days of the serial killer's penalty trial, with his lawyers fighting to save his life, jurors have heard a litany of testimonials to Ng's good character from a parade of witnesses.

It's no surprise that family members would talk of Ng's abused childhood in Hong Kong. But more than a dozen other witnesses called by Deputy Public Defender William Kelley threw yet another twist in a trial that has become one of California's longest and most expensive.

They were upstanding citizens: tough former Marines,

brawny prison guard who became Ng's phone a 66-year-old mother was briefly Ng's lover, they spoke of the defendant in almost tones.

None seemed more than Betty Kirkendall, dressed, well-spoken who traveled from Okla., with her daughter told of forming a relationship with Ng through her prison ministry in 1980 before the killings began.

Kirkendall said he murdered, she was hospitalized problems, had a child and had no one to care with when she began letters to Ng, who was stationed at Leavenworth for weapons theft while in the Marine Corps.

To her surprise, s

“Child molestation will not stop overnight because of this bill. But if we see a pattern that a person has fallen into, we need to red-flag that and follow it all the way through.”

— Mike Reynolds

Dustin: ‘Three Strikes’ creator supports Briggs’ legislation

Continued from Page B1
authorship,” Haaland said.

Reynolds said: “This is a bill that should stand on its own merit, no matter whose name is behind it. It’s a shame that a law like this, that’s so obvious, has to be proposed.”

Dustin’s parents were convicted in 1996 of child endangerment involving an older brother, Dougie. According to court records, Douglas struck the child and Kathy failed to stop or report the abuse.

When Douglas was released from prison in 1998, he violated the terms of his parole by staying with Kathy and Dustin and failing to attend a treatment program, authorities say.

Douglas Haaland Sr. said Reynolds can play a crucial role in the success of this bill because he has contacts with state district attorneys and law enforcement groups that may champion the idea.

Briggs is to introduce the bill in the Assembly’s Public Safety committee Tuesday.

State Sen. Jim Costa, a Fresno Democrat, announced last week he has amended a bill, SB 1199, to include the same directives

sought in Briggs’ legislation.

Haaland said he’s flattered that his grandson’s plight has prompted two legislators to take notice of the system’s deficiencies. However, because he helped Briggs draft Dustin’s Law, “my heart is with the Briggs measure,” he said.

“I’m sure Sen. Costa has the same goal as Assemblyman Briggs,” Haaland said. “I will await their discussion on what vehicle they wish to use to put Dustin’s Law into effect.”

Reynolds said he would seek bipartisan support.

“A 2-year-old doesn’t know the difference between a Democrat or Republican,” he said. “These types of laws should cross political barriers.”

Unlike “Three Strikes” and another sentencing law he championed, “10-20-Life,” Reynolds said he doesn’t expect a dramatic drop in child abuse if a bill is passed.

“Child molestation will not stop overnight because of this bill,” Reynolds said. “But if we see a pattern that a person has fallen into, we need to red-flag that and follow it all the way through.”

HARD TO
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L A I

Race: Annual event draws record number of participants

Continued from Page B1

before the fire was set. The father committed suicide.

■ Last September, a 7-year-old Kerman boy escaped the home of his grandparents where he said he was routinely beaten and sometimes chained to a chair.

■ In November, 2-year-old April Adams was found strangled in a Farmersville foster home.

"This race shows that child abuse is a common problem and the community is out here to support [our cause]," Huerta said.

The race has been growing annually, with 900 preregistrants this year, 100 more than last year, she said. But organizers won't know until later how many people actually showed up. Huerta expects that number will be about 1,100 runners.

Another race Saturday morning on the other side of Woodward Park also benefited children. The March of Dimes, a national nonprofit organization that raises money for research and education about birth defects, had about 500 people running 10 kilometers or strolling two miles, said Barbara Houston, the organization's field services director in San Francisco.

Proceeds have been growing rapidly, Houston said, counting \$70,000 from sponsors and donors this year.

Donations and sponsorships from the Race to Stop Child Abuse have soared to almost one-third more than last year, with \$42,000 from local businesses and private donors. Last year, that figure was \$30,000.

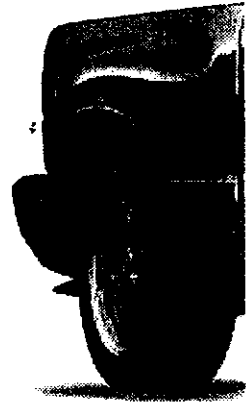
Sponsorship money benefits foster children, going to college scholarships, camp scholarships, dance lessons and other items that "help a kid live a full life," Huerta said.

Family is especially important to Gregory Burns. That's why he wanted to bring his three youngest children, ages 3, 7 and 9, to the event.

As his youngest, Barry, admired in a mirror the shades of black, blue and red face paint on his cheeks, the elder Burns talked about the different forms of discipline — the kind that can cause permanent marks, he said.

"We tell them there are words that are not appropriate, and spanking should be used with discretion," Burns said. "We wanted to promote safety within the family, too."

THE

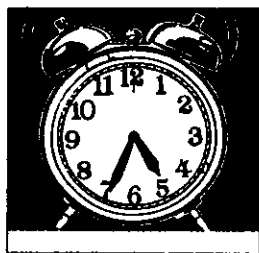


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ATTIENCE



PHOTOS BY DIANA BALDRICA — THE FRESNO BEE
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Haaland pleads insanity

Douglas Haaland Jr. will argue that years of drug use led him to kill his 4-year-old son.

BY LEWIS GRISWOLD
 THE FRESNO BEE

Douglas Haaland Jr. on Tuesday pleaded innocent by reason of insanity to killing his 4-year-old son, Dustin.

It will be up to a jury to determine if Haaland was legally insane at the time the crime occurred.

Defense attorney Paul Fairless said after a brief court hearing that Haaland's insanity plea is based upon his client's "long-term drug use."

Dustin's body was discovered Jan. 12 in a shallow grave in a vineyard west of Fresno. Douglas Haaland and the boy's mother, Kathy Haaland, were arrested three days later.



Douglas
Haaland Jr.

After accepting Haaland's plea, Judge John Gallagher set a trial date of Oct. 27 and appointed Dr. Norman Hendricksen to evaluate Haaland's mental health.

Haaland, 26, is charged with murder, child abuse resulting in death and spousal abuse. He faces up to life in prison if convicted.

Dustin's death prompted calls for "Dustin's Law," which would require local authorities to be notified whenever a convicted child abuser is released from prison. The proposal moved forward in the Legislature on Tuesday.

Douglas Haaland Jr. was released from Corcoran

Please see Haaland, back page

Visalia could add jobs with center

Back page

Haaland: Jury must decide guilt, then sanity

Continued from Page A1

State Prison in June 1998 after serving 2½ years for beating his first son, Dougie, then 22 months.

At a preliminary hearing last month, Kathy Haaland testified that her husband beat Dustin to death Nov. 23, 1998, by ramming the boy's head against a wall after the child failed to pick up his toys.

The defendant's father, Douglas Haaland Sr., said Tuesday: "It's a plea of nonresponsibility. It'll be interesting to see when this merry-go-round ends."

The elder Haaland described his relationship with his son as "distant and strained."

He said he has spoken with his son twice on the phone and visited him in the Fresno County Jail. His son has always maintained his innocence, he said.

Douglas Haaland Sr., a political consultant in Sacramento, and Dustin's other relatives have filed an \$11.5 million claim against Fresno County, alleging that social service agencies failed

to protect Dustin.

Since Dustin's death, Kathy Haaland has given birth to a son, Sean Evan, in jail.

James Opplinger, chief homicide prosecutor at the Fresno County District Attorney's Office, said anyone accused of a crime has a legal right to plead insanity, although the "tactic" rarely succeeds. He said 4% of sanity pleas lead to acquittal.

Opplinger said insanity pleas are usually an acknowledgement that the accused committed a crime because details of the crime are invariably discussed when the doctor interviews the defendant.

Findings of court-appointed doctors are shared with prosecution and defense attorneys, he said.

Opplinger said he knows of no major cases in which a jury decided that long-term drug use was grounds for being innocent by reason of insanity.

The court can appoint up to three doctors to evaluate a defendant's mental health. The de-

fense customarily hires its own doctor, too.

At the trial, proceedings are divided into guilt and sanity phases.

The jury first must decide a defendant's guilt or innocence.

If the defendant is found guilty, the jury hears testimony about his mental health and determines if he was legally sane when the crime was committed.

If the defendant is found sane by a jury, he is sentenced by the judge.

If he is found insane, he's considered innocent by reason of insanity and can be committed to a state hospital.

While legal authorities debate the details of Dustin Haaland's death, elected officials in Sacramento have begun to weigh the merits of proposed legislation triggered by the case.

The Senate Human Services Committee on Tuesday approved Sen. Jim Costa's version of

"Dustin's Law," which would require California prisons to notify local sheriffs and child-welfare

agencies when a convicted child abuser is paroled into an area. It also would provide to immediate family members of the victim conditions of the convict's parole.

Costa, D-Fresno, has added a provision to the bill allowing parole officers to call Child Protective Services and trigger a new investigation if they suspect a parolee has violated a court order forbidding family contact.

The change would expand existing law that requires a suspicion that child abuse had occurred. Under the proposal, an investigation could begin if there is "reasonable expectation" that child abuse might occur.

The legislation by Costa will go to the Appropriations Committee within two weeks.

A similar bill by Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, has stalled in the Senate Public Safety Committee.

■ Bee staff writer Mike Lewis is contributed to this report.

English: filled with

Continued from Page 1

Those people include Tina "Tina" Melchior, old southeast Fresno. To help prepare for ship test, she would workers at the Deinghouse where with questions about Constitution and country's government.

"They wondered, 'bothering them.' 'They didn't think to pass. They thought wasting my time.' She passed the test and credits the received through El Colegio Popular by Gonzalez, 58, Mexico, co-founder Popular in 1988. The organization works with the Catholic Fresno. It is fun through the Ja Foundation in San and with federal money.

Gonzalez's work grants recently earned honor of becoming Valley resident re the Immigrant Legal Center, a civil-rights based in San Francisco. Much of the work

Hepatitis: 7th-graders must be inoculated

Continued from Page A1

Editorials

Little boy lost

Dustin's death points out system's fatal flaws.

If the short, sad life of Dustin Haaland teaches us anything, it is this: Put children first.

Before restoring the "family," before protecting a criminal (even your own kin), before allowing a mother convicted of felony child endangerment to be responsible for another child, before authorizing the release of a child abuser back into the community he violated, before "losing track" of an abuser in violation of his parole, we must put the children first.

A story by staff writer Michael Krikorian on the front page of today's Bee lays out the details of how 4-year-old Dustin was a victim of not only his family, but the system that was supposed to protect him.

There is blame flying everywhere in the Haaland case. The No. 1 suspects are the parents, Kathy and Douglas Haaland Jr. Both have chilling records of child abuse and neglect. Both are in custody on parole violations, but neither has been charged with their son's death.

Officials hit with collateral damage could fill up a concert hall. It's easy to see what went wrong:

- State parole agents did not hold Haaland accountable for not attending batterers' classes, and allowed Haaland to dupe them into thinking he was not in his wife's home where he could harm his child.

- Child Protective Services allowed Kathy Haaland to regain custody of Dustin, and did not follow-up to determine Dustin's well-being.

- The state prison system did not notify CPS that Haaland, a convicted child abuser, was being released. The law does not require notification and that must be corrected immediately.

There is much to be learned from Dustin Haaland's death, and state and county officials must move quickly before other children meet

the same fate. Drop the excuses about excessive caseloads and a lack of communication between agencies.

"We know what went wrong," says Sgt. Jose Flores, head of the homicide unit at the Fresno County Sheriff's department, which is investigating the murder. "But we are going to fix it. We are not looking to blame anyone. We are looking for solutions."

The truth that no one seems to want to face is that good communication is a time-consuming process. There needs to be sufficient people on staff so agents, counselors and administrators have time to talk to each other. We seem to pour money into prisons with glee, but cry poverty when it is time for convicts to move in next door. That has to change in all areas, but with children first.

Local and state officials struggle honestly with the difficulties of "prioritizing" criminals according to the severity of their crimes. We would suggest a heavy mitigating factor in setting these priorities should be placed on the vulnerability of the preferred targets. Who most needs our protection? Little children.

There is some momentum now for creating new legislation, "Dustin's Law," which would tighten laws about paroled child abusers just as "Megan's Law" warns communities about paroled sexual predators.

It is clearly needed. Concerns about neighborhood vigilantes have not been a problem with Megan's Law and we feel confident a similar ruling would work in much the same way. There should always be utmost concern for accuracy so no innocent person suffers needlessly. Once again, we must weigh the possible downside with our highest priority.

Now is the time for our legislators to take the hands of the Valley's children and lead the campaign for Dustin's Law and to fix the other gaps in the system. This important work now rests in the hands of State Senators Jim Costa, Dick Monteith and Chuck Poochigian and Assembly members Mike Briggs, Dennis Cardoza, Dean Florez, Sarah Reyes, Roy Ashburn and George House. They must act now.

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Stand up for Dustin

Death of 4-year-old should move legislators to champion children.

Fnally, someone in government is standing up for Dustin Haaland.

Fresno County Supervisor Sharon Levy is the first elected official to speak out forcefully in this child's defense, demanding accountability for the gaping holes in our social service, probation and parole systems. Dustin, 4, was forced back into the care of his mother, Kathy Haaland, who was convicted of felony child endangerment. The father, Douglas Haaland Jr., served 2½ years in prison on the same charge, then returned to live with his wife and child. The authorities checked on Doug Haaland Jr., the probation department monitored his wife, but no one was there for Dustin. The child's battered body was found Jan. 12, buried in a shallow grave in a west Fresno vineyard.

Levy is right to ask tough questions of the county employees who report to her. Now the agencies involved must resist the temptation to get defensive, put their own egos and excuses aside and show the courage demonstrated by Sharon Levy. Get to the truth and fix the problem.

That said, we see no benefit to the board's insistence that the county delay pursuit of a \$40,000 state grant to combat domestic violence. The board made a strong symbolic statement by requesting this delay but no real good would be accomplished for the county by sending grant money elsewhere in the state. The problem is not the grant money. The problem is accountability for results.

We await next week's report by Gary Carozza, director of community health, when he is

scheduled to account for \$350,000 in state money received over the last three years. The money was earmarked to combat family violence. Still, as Levy points out, all this money could have been spent very well and wisely,

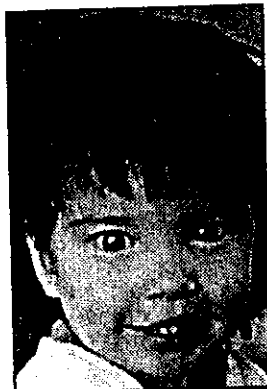
but if our county departments are not ready to fight for children, more money won't help.

We are troubled that Levy seems to be standing alone on this issue? Why has there been only silence from our state legislators, who have the power to change the system before another child dies? Where are state Sens. Jim Costa, Dick Monteith and

Chuck Poochigian and Assembly members Mike Briggs, Dennis Cardoza, Dean Florez, Sarah Reyes, Roy Ashburn and George House?

Dustin's Law, an idea similar to Megan's Law, would require the community to be notified when a child abuser is released. It deserves to become law. Pulling the community into the fight against child abuse is the wisest use of resources. There will never be enough Child Protective Services workers, parole officers or social workers to watch abusers every day. The community, however, can.

Somewhere in the Valley, a bruised and beaten child is crying today in her own home. Tomorrow, she may die. We expect the members of the Valley delegation to stand tall at their wooden desks, to put pictures of Dustin Haaland inside their leather daybooks to remind them of who they are fighting for. We challenge our elected officials to make California the children's champion.



Dustin Haaland

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Lawmakers take action for Dustin

Death of a Valley child inspires elected officials to finally improve protections.

We welcome the willingness of the Valley's legislators to become the state's leaders in protecting abused children.

Assembly Members Mike Briggs and Sarah Reyes and State Sen. Jim Costa are presenting legislative proposals this week to require more protection for children whose parents hurt them.

The legislators are responding to an investigative report in Sunday's Bee by staff writer Michael Krikorian detailing the serious gaps in our system that allowed Dustin Haaland, 4, to die from abuse. This newspaper has been urging elected officials to fix the state's badly flawed child protection system.

Authorities suspect Dustin's parents in the boy's death, but neither has been charged. Dustin's body was found Jan. 12 buried in a west Fresno vineyard.

Briggs, a Fresno Republican, is expected today to announce an Assembly bill labeled "Dustin's Law." That legislation would require the state Department of Corrections to notify local law enforcement and county child protective services of the release or parole of any person serving a child-abuse sentence.

Reyes, a Fresno Democrat, on Thursday

called for an audit of child protective services around the state.

Costa, a Fresno Democrat, has been working on child abuse issues for many years. On Thursday, he announced that he amended his current child-care proposal to include a request for improvement of local notification whenever a convicted child abuser is released from prison.

The response of the Valley's officials is encouraging. Their efforts are too late for Dustin, but they may save other children around the state.

It is imperative that any bills put forward on this issue be precisely worded to afford children the broadest possible protections.

Briggs' legislation would require the state Department of Corrections to notify local law enforcement and county child protection services of the release or parole of any person serving a child-abuse sentence.

The bill should also include all versions of abuse, including child neglect, child endangerment and any other legal literary licorice that can be twisted around and sweetened up to provide cover for people who hurt children.

This week's efforts are just the beginning of what must be a sustained effort to untangle a complex issue.

Other pressures will arise, other issues will grab headlines, but it is important for our representatives to remain resolute, to look in the faces of the children who trust them, remember Dustin and press on.

Step by step

NATO must prepare to fight on ground, but only if needed.

In recent days what was once unspeakable has become thinkable: U.S. officials now talk, albeit still hypothetically, about using ground troops to drive Yugoslav forces out

a logical departure point for an invasion. But if NATO is to accomplish its mission, the cost must be borne. The Clinton administration has not hesitated in the past to rush ships, planes and troops to the Persian Gulf in response to aggressive moves by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Elements of the military force that would be

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Rip away the secrecy

Child abusers are deceiving and cunning predators. It will take everyone's help to stop them.

We are heartened by continuing reports that the community is finally coalescing behind creating Dustin's Law.

On Friday, Mike Reynolds, author of California's "Three Strikes" legislation, said he will support a version of the legislation being proposed following the death of 4-year-old Dustin Haaland. This newspaper has been campaigning for Dustin's Law, and we welcome Reynolds' involvement. Adding his influential voice to the cause will help hasten the legislative action needed to protect children.

"We can't bring back Dustin," Reynolds said. "This doesn't change anything, but we can try to help it from happening again."

Dustin's abused body was found Jan. 12 in a shallow grave in a west Fresno vineyard. Dustin's Law is a proposal being carried by Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno. The law would require that local authorities be notified when a child abuser is released from prison.

It's tragic that it has taken so long for our elected officials to act. But they now seem de-

termined to fix the badly flawed system.

Briggs said the draft bill was written Sunday, the day Bee staff writer Michael Krikorian detailed the many gaps in our system that resulted in Dustin's death. His parents have been arrested on suspicion of murder but neither is charged.

County Children's Protective Services workers had not made a house call since 1996, despite the fact that Dustin's father — Douglas Haaland Jr. — spent 2½ years in prison for beating the couple's first son, Dougie.

Kathy Haaland, Dustin's mother, was jailed for not reporting that abuse. CPS moved Dougie into foster care, and he has since been adopted. Kathy retained custody of Dustin.

On these pages, we have repeatedly called for action from our elected officials. First to respond was Supervisor Sharon Levy who made impassioned demands for answers for the county's flawed bureaucracy at Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting.

Her response was followed by legislative remedies proposed by Assembly Members Sarah Reyes, Briggs and State Sen. Jim Costa.

There is a need for everyone's energy and influence on this bill because legislation can get sidetracked as other issues grab headlines. But children's lives are at risk, and we must move forward wisely and quickly. Something good must come from Dustin's death.

Blowing in the wind

Clinton must be more consistent on

cations and insurance companies and farm products. And a U.S. rejection might worsen

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Put power into Dustin's Law

Precise language and adequate funding must ensure the law is effective, not just efficient.

The need for additional protections for abused children became startlingly apparent Tuesday as the Senate Public Safety Committee voted 5-0 to approve one of two working versions of Dustin's Law.

State Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, wrote SB 1199 and named it for Dustin Haaland, a 4-year-old boy whose abused body was found in a west Fresno vineyard in January. His father, Douglas Haaland Jr., is charged with his murder. His mother, Kathy, is charged with failing to stop a murder and helping to cover it up. Both have pleaded innocent.

Costa's bill, named for Dustin after a Bee report on the Haaland case detailed major shortcomings in the system, would require prisons to notify child welfare agencies and the victim's family when convicted child abusers are released back into the community.

In essence, child-welfare professionals responding to the bill said even if they knew Dustin's father was being released from prison back into the community they would not have known what to do about it.

Scary as it is, that is the reality in Fresno County. We would go further. Even if they knew what to do, they would not have had adequate staff to take a comprehensive look at

the situation, nor would they necessarily have the legal authority to do anything about it.

Make no mistake, Dustin's Law is a good start. But this small step by the state Legislature in no way releases Fresno County from its responsibility to adequately fund and empower the agency that is sometimes the only force standing between innocent children and unspeakable horrors. The county has shamefully allowed Child Protective Services to deteriorate.

Dustin's Law must require that everyone involved know "what to do." It must force agencies to coordinate and give protective services the authority to act swiftly on the child's behalf.

It was disappointing that one of the social workers' first reactions to the proposed law was not how to protect the children, but themselves. What is our liability? they wanted to know. Sad. Nevertheless, they have a point. Legislators must heed the concerns of the professionals in protective services and see that the bill has the funding and the language to make it effective, not just efficient. It would pay no honor to Dustin to create another hollow political gesture to make the public think the officials are doing something, when, in fact, they are not.

Another version of Dustin's Law, written by Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, is being crafted in the Assembly. Build strong muscle into that law and hold a ball peen hammer over the heads of the state's county supervisors until they make children's safety their top priority.

More binding arbitration

Burton and Villaraigosa attack local

sheriffs to manage their departments and

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Who will stand up for Dustin?

Assembly version of Dustin's Law survives political beating.

With every passing day, Dustin Haaland becomes less a symbol and more of a martyr for abused children in Fresno County.

The beaten body of Dustin, 4, was found in a west Fresno vineyard in January.

Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, has succeeded in getting a thin layer of "Dustin's Law," over its second legislative hurdle. On Tuesday, the state Assembly Public Safety Committee approved a version of the law, on a 5-0 vote. This success follows the unanimous approval of an earlier Senate bill written by Jim Costa, D-Fresno.

Briggs' legislation came out wounded from a skirmish with lobbyists representing social workers, though it will retain its primary intent: California prisons must notify local law enforcement and the district attorney's office when a convicted child abuser is paroled into an area, and immediate family members of the victims may request conditions of parole.

Observing the journey of this well-intentioned law makes it very clear why children suffer so in California. The factions that chopped away at the accountabilities provi-

sions in Briggs' measure were of one mind: protect the adults.

The social workers' lobby showed its self-absorbed priorities during these negotiations. Lobbyists and other supporters of Child Protective Services caseworkers gave Briggs an ultimatum: They would stall Assembly Bill 1689 until it was too late to pass this year or Briggs could accept their proposed changes and see his bill move ahead.

The Fresno Republican chose the latter option. He had to remove any language that would allow CPS to be notified. Outrageous.

It is certainly in everyone's best interest for caseworkers to fight for effective workloads. But they have no business at all deciding unilaterally how children are to be protected.

We appreciate the bipartisan leadership and cooperation Costa and Briggs have shown in carrying Dustin's Law. All the Valley's state lawmakers are on the team. But we are disgusted by the politics at work in the background, undermining these important efforts to protect children.

It is cowardly for grown men and women to protect their own hides at the expense of children whose lives are in danger. There is no sane reason why agencies should not communicate.

Are there any social service professionals willing to stand up for Dustin? Anyone at all?

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Good move for children

Audit will help learn how protective agencies can better communicate.

Momentum in Sacramento appears to be building for what we hope will result in drastic improvements in our system for protecting children. Assembly Member Sarah Reyes, D-Fresno, has advanced the effort one step by persuading the state auditor to analyze Fresno and Tulare county services.

The audit will not duplicate the efforts of Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno. Building on the Kern County study he received last year, and using statewide caseload information, the audit will attempt to determine where communication between agencies routinely breaks down. It also will examine whether parole, protective services and other agencies can better coordinate data so potentially dangerous situations can be anticipated.

State Auditor Kurt Sjoberg told the committee that he wants information gathered and reforms suggested to apply statewide. He is right.

The greatest concern, of course, is what happens to the information when it is compiled. What solid reforms will survive the legislative gantlet to help the children?

Sen. Costa was successful in getting approval for a statewide caseload study. That should be finished by the end of the year. By next year, Costa expects to have the information he

needs to propose a systemwide reform of Child Protective Services. The Reyes information will be helpful in that effort.

It is critical that the many competing adult interests ask their tough, expert questions; they are invaluable in making the wording of the legislation powerful and precise. But at the same time, they must place their own comfort second to the survival of children. We understand that this is not the primary purpose of the adult special-interest lobbies and unions. The lobbyists are hired to protect their members and clients. But if things are ever to get better for abused children, every constituency must be persuaded to put the long-term interests of our greater society first and then think of themselves.

One does not exist at the peril of the other. Most often what is good for the children is also healthy for the professionals who work for their good. But know this — where those needs collide, the children must come first. For those who say that's not OK, let them find another line of work.

We appreciate the vigor and passion the Valley lawmakers are bringing to this fight. So long as they remain sincere and resist any misguided pressures of adult special interests, the children will win. This is a complex issue, but we must not become lost in the mire.

As Denzel Washington implored Tom Hanks in the film "Philadelphia": "Explain it to me like I'm a 4-year-old" — the age of Dustin Haaland when he died.

The first casualty

Manipulation of facts clouds the Balkan war

tails of allied attacks are often sparse and selective, the better to present events in as favorable light as possible. Thus it's difficult for

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Lessons of Dustin's death

We talk about protecting children, but our actions speak otherwise.

One can only wonder if Dustin Haaland would be alive today if our governmental system had been as attentive to the 4-year-old before he was killed as it has been after his death. As so often happens, government doesn't move swiftly without being prodded by tragedy.

Now we have the full weight of the criminal justice system determining who is responsible for Dustin's death and state legislators in Sacramento pushing bills through the Assembly and Senate in an effort to prevent similar tragedies. The legislation is aptly named "Dustin's Law."

The real tragedy is that there were so many warning signs that Dustin's life never should have been in jeopardy. But his family failed him and then our governmental agencies failed him. There is plenty of blame to spread around, but it is crucial now that we learn from his death.

Fortunately, state Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, has been working diligently to get his version of a "Dustin's Law" passed. On Tuesday, the Senate Human Services Committee approved Costa's bill, which would require California prisons to notify local sheriffs and child-welfare agencies when a convicted child abuser is paroled into an area.

The legislation is headed for the Appropriations Committee. A similar measure by Assemblyman Mike Briggs, R-Fresno, has stalled in the Senate Public Safety Committee. Be-

cause Costa is a member of the majority party, his bill has the best chance of becoming law.

Costa's measure also would provide to immediate family members of a victim the conditions of the convict's parole. Dustin's father, Douglas Haaland Jr., was released from Corcoran State Prison in June 1998 after serving 2½ years for beating his first son, Dougie, then 22 months. Douglas Haaland Jr. has pleaded innocent by reason of insanity to killing Dustin. Kathy Haaland, Dustin's mother, has pleaded guilty to one count of child endangerment and one count of being an accessory after the fact. She has agreed to testify against her husband.

Dustin's Law was drafted after Bee staff writer Michael Krikorian detailed huge gaps in our child welfare system that resulted in the youngster's death. The legislation is the first major remedy to the problems exposed by The Bee's report. But there are many other areas that must be fixed, including a county Child Protective Services system that is collapsing under the weight of a massive caseload. The county Board of Supervisors and the state Legislature must be willing to put more money into the system to allow CPS workers a reasonable chance of doing their jobs.

But there also seems to be an attitude problem in the county and at the state level. We have heard too many excuses rationalizing a system that in the end can't — or won't — protect children. We must do better by the young people whose own families are hurting them.

We are making progress with Dustin's Law, but there is still much to do.

She shoots, she scores

World Cup brings American women to the fore.

fit perfectly. The U.S. team players are already stars with recognizable names — Mia Hamm, Brianna Scurry, Julie Foudy, Michelle Akers. Their team bus is chased by rabid auto-

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