

# Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth (CBRS) In Georgia as of July 1, 2008!

**A New Law...  
"No Heartbeat Act"  
SB 381  
Now GA CBRS!!**

**May 29, 2008**



Gov. Perdue said that he was pleased to sign the No Heartbeat Act into law for a CBRS for families.

**Official Signing of the No Heartbeat Act for the CBRS**  
Rep. Fran Millar, Tammy and Chris Campbell, Gov. Perdue, Erin and daughter Sara Grace Dickerson, Sen. Dan Weber, Marcia McGinnis



Sara Grace and Gov. Perdue sign the bill!

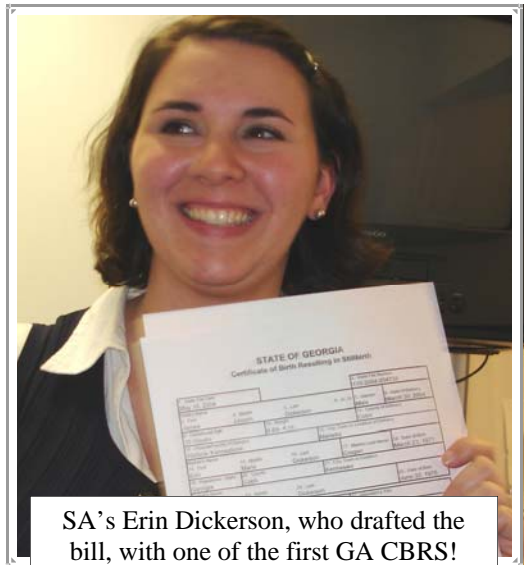
## What is The Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth?

The Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth (CBRS) is a memorial document that families who have experienced a stillborn (20 weeks or 350 grams) child can request. It recognizes the birth of their baby separate from their baby's death. (It is separate from the fetal death certificate.) It provides a lasting document for recognition of a baby born still. The CBRS brings comfort, closure, and healing for the family.

For more details and link to actual bill:  
[www.shareatlanta.org/legacy/GACBRS.htm](http://www.shareatlanta.org/legacy/GACBRS.htm)

### Information (when available) included on the CBRS

- (1) Name (as provided by parent when requesting a CBRS or on the Fetal Death Record). If no name is provided, the Vital Records will fill in Baby Girl or Baby Boy and the last name of the parents.;
- (2) Date, time and place (hospital, county) of delivery; Gender;
- (3) Mother's name and residence; Father's name;
- (4) The attendant at delivery;
- (5) Gestational age and weight at delivery;
- (6) Type of delivery (single, twin, triplet, etc.)
- (7) "This certificate is not proof of live birth."



SA's Erin Dickerson, who drafted the bill, with one of the first GA CBRS!

## How to Request the CBRS

Under the new law, the Office of Vital Records (OVR) will implement the issuance of the CBRS to parents who request one. The request must be initiated by phone, 404-679-4702, to the OVR. (As of 7.1.08, the process is not available via the internet.) The OVR will then explain the procedure to follow. The cost is \$10.00. You may request the CBRS at any time after your loss. By law, the OVR must issue the CBRS within 60 days after the request is made. As with a live birth certificate and a Fetal Death Certificate, no parent automatically receives the CBRS. It is retroactive. If your loss happened before the bill, but since 1919 and has been reported to the OVR by the delivery hospital or by the delivery attendant, you may request a CBRS.

**The Road to the Georgia General Assembly...2008**  
**A New Law... “No Heartbeat Act” SB 381**  
**The Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth (CBRS)**  
**January 14—May 29, 2008**



**GA CBRS: Two SHARE Atlanta (SA) moms; SA parents; friends, family, and GA legislators made it happen.** Marcia McGinnis, president and co-founder of SA and mom to Catherine, Elizabeth and Seth (babies who died too soon), felt that Georgia needed the CBRS that 21 other states had put into law since 1999. To ease the process, she wanted to have a draft of a bill ready to hand to a legislative sponsor.

SA mom, Erin Dickerson, after the stillbirth of James Lincoln, on March 30, 2004, expressed interest in a CBRS. In 2007, Marcia and Erin researched what should be included in the bill. Then, Erin, a lawyer, drafted the bill. They brought the “No Heartbeat Act” to the 2008 GA General Assembly.

The title came from a poem, “No Heartbeat,” that Roger Deane, SA dad, had written in memory of his stillborn son, Russell Deane. SA moms who helped us at specific times were: Reese Ritter (Dorothy Ellen stillborn ‘87), Tammy Campbell (Aidan stillborn 5.07) and Allie Brokoff (Ethan stillborn 8.07) , and Erin’s friend, Gail Kaley.

Marcia’s senator and representative: Sen. Dan Weber and Rep. Fran Millar sponsored the bill. Marcia and Erin testified for committees. Over 400 emails were sent out to SA members, families, and friends when action was needed. We encouraged all to set a positive image of the Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community, as we worked to help others understand our issues. Legislators were very supportive.



On May 29, in the ceremonial office, Gov. Perdue expressed how pleased he was to sign this important No Heartbeat Act into law so families could have a CBRS. He spent about 10 minutes with us - a wonderful memory for us! Marcia McGinnis 7.08

**SA Moms - Last Day of Session –Needed Support!**  
 It-rt: Tammy Campbell, Tamara Partiss, Teressa Cochran, Donna Wilkerson-Wever, Erin and Marcia, not pictured Jennifer O’Connor.



**Celebrating!** Erin and Marcia’s dream for a GA CBRS is realized!

**Confirmation from our Legislative Sponsors: Senator Dan Weber, Rep. Fran Millar, and Rep. Wendell Willard (Marcia McGinnis’ experience):**

Pregnancy and newborn loss issues aren’t always easily accepted. When I initially called my representative and senator, Rep. Fran Millar and Senator Dan Weber and, later, Rep. Wendell Willard, I explained what the CBRS was and how it would make a difference for families. I feared that they might turn me away. Even though, I have learned how to address these issues, I remember the denial by those outside of the Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community (PNLC). When each responded that this was an important piece of legislation, I was overjoyed. Their confirmation meant a great deal to us.

**200 GA Legislators Spoke:** Senator Weber guided SB 381 carefully through the Senate. On February 21, when he presented SB 381, he expressed the significance and goodness in supporting families with this special memento in memory of their child. On April 4, Rep. Millar asked that the voting board be turned to a sea of green “Yes” votes. These would show compassion and human decency in passing SB 381. He hoped those involved with the CBRS would have a favorable memory of the General Assembly.



**Sen. Dan Weber & Rep. Fran Millar Sponsored the No Heartbeat Act.**

With the House and Senate vote, around 200 legislators voted “YES” (Senate-48 to 0; House-162 to 3)! Ten years ago, this could not have happened with such overwhelming support. Five or six legislators told us that they experienced a similar loss, and that this bill was meaningful to them. Many couldn’t believe that a stillborn baby’s birth wasn’t already recognized. Advocacy has made a difference. As we departed from the capitol at 11 pm the last day of the session, we rejoiced in the incredible support that the legislators had given The No Heartbeat Act!



## Significance of our Babies... Advocacy, Support, and the CBRS



Roger and Taylor participating in SA Memorial Service 1996 where he read his poem for the first time. It is read each year.

The No Heartbeat Act was named after Roger's poem.

### No Heartbeat

**No Heartbeat**  
Nothing else need be said  
We cannot find the heartbeat  
I am afraid your son is dead

Now we go on with our lives  
Strangers ask me everyday  
How many children do you have  
I don't quite know what to say

How stupid you are in your world  
No understanding for my pain  
My child was alive and we loved him  
Nothing will ever be the same

Two words that changed our lives forever  
Nothing will be the same  
Two words that brought us closer together  
We hope we won't go insane

I tell them I have a son  
Who died before he was born  
He was truly an inspiration  
Now we only can mourn

Now we know we aren't alone  
Two words have affected so many  
We all love our children  
Even when our arms are empty

Our child has died before his birth  
People have nothing to say  
To us it does not matter  
We love him anyway

Don't be so sad they say  
You are still so very young  
It was meant to be, they say  
You can always have another one

We cannot find the heartbeat  
We cannot find the rhythm  
Our child has died and left us  
We will hold him again in heaven

Roger Deane, SHARE Atlanta  
*In memory of Russell Joseph Deane*  
*Stillborn April 7, 1992*

## *Our Babies will be "Forever in Our Hearts"*

### Denial of Loss Slowly Giving Way to Recognition of Our Babies and Our Grief...

Even in the early 90s, the medical community and close relatives and friends often felt it best if bereaved parents were spared the sadness of seeing and holding their babies. They encouraged parents to let the hospital dispose of their child and to move on with their life. Pregnancy and newborn loss grief support groups, such as SHARE Atlanta (SA), were often shunned for fear they would cause the parents to think about and wallow in their grief.

In 1992, Roger and Taylor Deane's suffered the full term stillbirth of their son, Russell, and were encouraged to move on. Fortunately, the Deanes attended SA, and their grief slowly healed. Roger's poem reflects his grief and healing. For fifteen years, they supported SA by leading the Subsequent Pregnancy Group, keeping the data base, and funding SA's website. Their daughter, Rachel, born in 1994, wrote and read a poem in memory of Russell. Their family supported the passing of the No Heartbeat Act.

### Groups and Advocacy Important for Change...Advocacy happens as we pair need with healing family activities.

Because of SA member's outreach, we have memorial services, an angel garden with memorial bricks, candlelightings, a website and forums. Cindy Ivey (Lacey stillborn 9.03), our March of Dimes' team captain, has lead our team to place in the Top Ten National Family teams for the last 3 years. Our 4Bs - Blankets, Buntings, Bonnets and Booties an outreach from our families to local hospitals happened because of Alan and Kelly Mishkoff's stillbirths of Zachary and Jeremy (1.04 & 11.04). Inservices provide connections with local professionals. These activities bring comfort and healing as families honor their child's memory.

### Grieving More Widely Accepted as Normal and Healthy..

Today, parents survive this loss with dignity and the ability to make this tragic experience part of "who they are." Denial and avoidance of the Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community's needs and issues are giving way to important changes. Babies are recognized as significant and families' grief and healing are embraced. **The CBRS is part of these important changes.** Marcia McGinnis



**SA members "Walk to Remember"**  
As they raise money for  
March of Dimes each April.

## Erin Dickerson's Story A CBRS for Recognition & Healing...

Erin's Testimony for  
General Assembly



Erin and Jeff with their family at the SA MODS' 2008 March for Babies.

On March 29th 2004, I was nine months pregnant with a kicking healthy baby boy. His nursery was complete. We had decided on his name, and we were waiting for him to join our family of three. However, on March 30th 2004, after 12 hours of labor, James Lincoln Dickerson was born still. He was 6.4lbs and 21 inches long, with thick curly brown hair, chubby cheeks, his daddy's cleft chin, and perfect in every way. After testing of James and of me, we were left with no answer as to why he died. I had given birth, and instead of leaving the hospital with our new son, I left with a teddy bear and a memento box.

When I came home from the hospital I sat in my son's cowboy nursery and sobbed. Our dreams for this boy were shattered so suddenly. I never imagined I would have to explain to our daughter that her baby brother had died, or that I would have to repeat the explanation every time she saw me crying.

All I have of James is a few pictures, a hospital bracelet, and sympathy cards. I cling to these tangible mementos, because they are the only proof of this experience. I cannot describe how painful it is to grieve so deeply for someone no one else knows.

I learned I could get a fetal death certificate from Vital records. Then I thought that if I can get a death certificate, then I must be able to get a birth certificate. I researched on the Internet and discovered that there are many states that have Certificates of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth for stillborn babies, but unfortunately, I do not live in one of those states. Georgia only recognize my son's death.

I wanted a CBRS for James. At that time, my grief was so consuming that I didn't consider that a day would come where I could seek legislation to make these certificates a reality. In the four years since James' death, I have met countless other grieving moms and dads through SHARE Atlanta, a pregnancy and newborn loss grief support group. I began to understand that these families shared not only my grief, but the desire to have their precious baby recognized and their experience validated. Our babies were born, and we want a certificate that recognizes their birth, not just their death. I want a CBRS as tangible proof that this child who forever changed me, was real, and was here, if only for a short time.

Nothing can bring these children back to us, but a CBRS offers recognition, validation, and compassion. A CBRS is a step toward healing for Georgia families grieving the loss of their baby. Erin Dickerson 2.2008

**Advocacy Opens Doors for Emotional Support** Today, many doctors and nurses encourage grief support. In the hospital, parents who have had a loss of any length of gestation are often given mementos. Many of the tiniest babies are given names. Parents are offered pictures, hand and foot prints, to hold and dress their baby, and caring ways to say goodbye. The parents are given "permission to grieve."

**Advocacy Leads to Medical Research to Find Answers** Every step of advocacy is vital for appreciating the significance of each child. No matter how long the child is carried or how long the child lives, parents should be given the option to recognize their baby and to grieve as they wish. With recognition, more parents *seek answers* for preterm and newborn death. Organizations now appreciate the number of stillbirths (28,000) and other pregnancy (miscarriage—over 50% pregnancies end in miscarriage) and newborn losses (900,000 - pregnancy losses per year). Numbers encourage answers, research, and support. The CBRS encourages recognition of babies born still. The CBRS makes a difference for families.

**Emory Stillbirth Study is part of a large NIH study to find answers for stillbirths.**

In Atlanta, 8 hospitals are involved in this study that was begun because of parent advocacy. The March of Dimes focuses on birth defects and prematurity. These issues can cause stillbirths and miscarriages. MODS embraces pregnancy care. The Pregnancy Loss Institute does research for cord accidents. The Alan E. Beer Center works to prevent pregnancy loss. More babies are living as a result of these kinds of programs. Recognition for every type of loss: ectopic, miscarriage, stillbirth and newborn loss is crucial. Advocacy will help end the heartbreak of the death of our babies. **The CBRS is a huge and significant step in the right direction.** Marcia McGinnis 7.08



SA presented to Emory's  
Stillbirth Study's Program.  
Janice Daniels (Research Coordinator)  
and Dr. Hogue, Dir. WWC on right.