

Mother of abducted paperboy gets photos 24 years later of boy bound, gagged

JAMES BELTRAN
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — The mother of a boy abducted 24 years ago said she's bewildered by two photographs left at her front door, apparently showing her son and two other children bound and gagged.

The old photos appear to show 12-year-old Johnny Gosch with his mouth gagged and his hands and feet tied. The boy is wearing the same sweat pants Johnny was wearing when he disappeared while delivering newspapers on the morning of Sept. 5,

1982, his mother said.

"It's like reliving it," Noreen Gosch told The Associated Press on Thursday night. "But the bigger picture is, 'Why are they doing this?'"

"Whoever had these photos had them for 24 years. I don't understand why they would do this now. It must be some kind of message."

Gosch said investigators confirmed the photos were authentic and likely taken within "hours or days" of the abduction. She said they were checking for fingerprints that could lead them to the source and possibly a breakthrough

in a case that has long baffled authorities. The other boys in the photo were unidentified.

The photos were given to the state Division of Criminal Investigation's computer crime task force, West Des Moines police Lt. Jeff Miller said. He said police have not positively identified the boy in the photos as Johnny Gosch.

Johnny's disappearance triggered nationwide fears of child abductions. He was one of the first faces of missing or abducted children to appear on milk cartons across the country.

Several theories have

developed since he vanished before dawn while delivering Sunday newspapers. His newspaper wagon was discovered near his West Des Moines home, but few substantial clues have surfaced since then.

Gosch believes her son was taken by child pornographers. She told authorities he briefly contacted her in 1997 but feared for his life and declined to give details about where he was. She believes his abductors got him involved in crimes, which is why he is hiding his identity.

The National Center for

Missing Children is examining the other boys in the photograph and trying to match it with its database of missing children.

"These kids have parents someplace," Gosch said. "I'm sure they feel the same way I did. ... Hopefully we can do some good and give these parents some peace."

Johnny was Gosch's youngest of three children, and she has devoted her life to finding him, from raising money for private detectives to following her own leads and prodding police to try harder. She also wrote a book



Johnny Gosch

called "Why Johnny Can't Come Home."

Bell says he would veto 'trigger law' on abortion

APRIL CASTRO
Associated Press

AUSTIN — Democratic candidate for governor Chris Bell said Friday he would veto proposed attempts to preemptively outlaw abortion in Texas in the event that the U.S. Supreme Court overturns the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision.

A Houston-area candidate for state Senate has promised to propose a so-called trigger law during the next legislative session.

"I would veto that," Bell told The Associated Press on Friday. "I think the majority of Texans are still pro-choice. I don't think they're pro-abortion, but they understand that there are instances where that very painful choice is going to have to be made."

Bell is facing Republican Gov. Rick Perry and independents Kinky Friedman and Carole Keeton Strayhorn on the Nov. 7 ballot.

Abortion rights advocates should help "find ways to make it as rare as possible," Bell said. "But to make it illegal, that's not the road to go down."

A handful of states already have adopted a trigger law. GOP Senate hopeful and Houston radio talk



Chris Bell

show host Dan Patrick, who has promised to file the legislation, said he expects the Supreme Court to overturn Roe vs. Wade, which legalized abortion.

"It will be up to the states then to make a decision," Patrick said recently on his popular Houston radio talk show. "It could take years to work through that political firestorm. I want to have a law on the books as soon as the Supreme Court acts."

Friedman also would veto such legislation, spokeswoman Laura Stromberg said.

"Kinky is very much pro-choice," she said. "He believes in a woman's right to choose and would most certainly veto a bill like that."

A spokesman for Perry's

campaign said the governor supports any efforts to "preserve the sanctity of life."

"It's hard to comment on a specific bill that hasn't even been written," said spokesman Robert Black. "The governor would certainly want to see the bill."

Perry and Strayhorn oppose abortion except in the instances of rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother.

On other issues, Bell wants to give all Texas teachers a \$4,000 pay raise to bring them up to the national average. He would fund the salary hike by increasing the rate of the state's new business tax, though he wouldn't specify by how much.

Bell does not favor increasing the state's sales tax, which was batted around during recent legislative attempts to overhaul the state's tax structure. Bell would be open to proposals to expand gambling to help pay for public education and other programs.

For months, Bell has campaigned on lessening the state's dependence on high-stakes testing in

schools. While a test like the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is required for schools to get federal money, Bell proposes that the test not be used to rank schools and promote students to the next grade.

Despite the crowded ballot and his struggles with name recognition, Bell is optimistic about his chances in November.

"I'm the Democratic nominee and I really do think that in a state the size of Texas, that it's almost impossible to mount a truly competitive effort without being the nominee of one of the major parties," Bell said.

Public fascination with the independent candidacies of Strayhorn and Friedman is "beginning to run its course," he said.

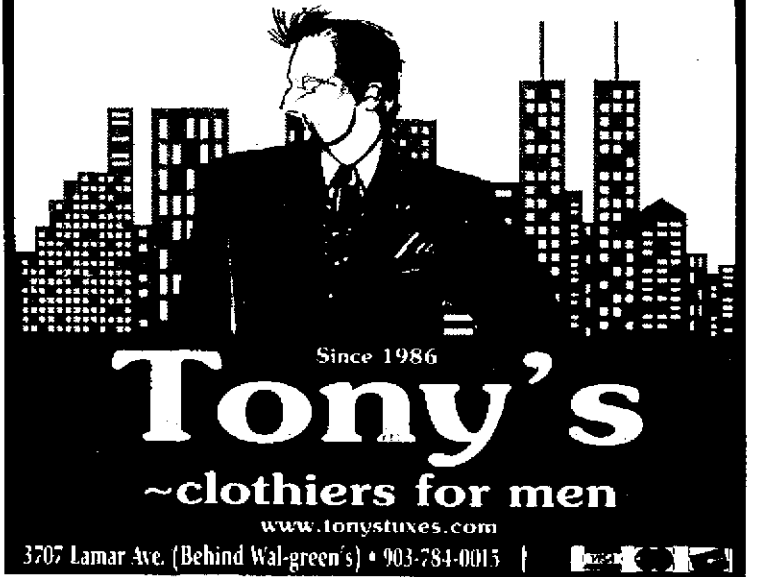
He believes the "anybody-but-Perry" bloc of voters will eventually consolidate behind his campaign rather than splitting up among the three alternatives.

"Obviously, we have to build on that," he said. "I have to continue to become better known."

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