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## MADIGAN PROPOSES STRONGER STALKING LEGISLATION

### *Statute Would Create "No Contact" Order Against Stalkers*

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced her intention to introduce legislation to strengthen state stalking laws and increase the protection available to victims. Madigan's legislative proposal is the result of the discussion yesterday at her roundtable with law enforcement and victim advocates on the state's current response to stalking.

"Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable event but a series of acts directed against a victim," Madigan said. "So even when victims know there's a danger, it can be difficult for law enforcement to recognize, investigate, prosecute and convict stalkers. With the advice of law enforcement and victim advocates, we've drafted this important piece of legislation to give victims greater protection and law enforcement better tools to prosecute and, ultimately, prevent incidents of stalking."

Madigan's proposed legislation would update Illinois law by broadening the definition of stalking to criminalize behaviors that clearly cause victims fear or emotional distress and recognizing that not all stalking behaviors involve threats of bodily harm. The legislation would establish a procedure for victims to obtain a "stalking no-contact order." Current law only allows orders of protection when an established relationship exists between victims and their stalkers, but statistics show that victims don't always know their stalkers. In addition, a recent report by the U.S. Department of Justice shows that nearly 70 percent of stalking victims were unable to obtain protection orders.

The proposed legislation also covers current and future technologies that stalkers use to track and harass their victims. Stalkers currently can use a range of devices - such as computers, global positioning systems, or hidden cameras - to track victims. By taking into consideration the way stalkers use new technology, the legislation will enhance law enforcement's ability to protect victims.

Madigan crafted the legislation based on the discussion at her roundtable on stalking. Joining Attorney General Madigan at yesterday's roundtable were:

- Ron Matekaitis, DeKalb County State's Attorney
- Michael Bischof, President of the Cynthia L. Bischof Memorial Foundation
- Sergeant Brett Wisnauski, Algonquin Police Department
- Linda Sanford, Program Coordinator for Family Rescue
- Jennifer Coleman, Cook County Assistant State's Attorney, Felony Domestic Violence Division
- The Hon. Laura Bertucci Smith, Circuit Court of Cook County, Domestic Relations
- Jan Russell, Domestic Violence Advocate for the Chicago Police Department

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