



ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN

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From the Illinois Senate
Senator Toi Hutchinson

For Immediate Release:
August 27, 2009

Media Contact:
Senator Hutchinson's Office
Jillian Dykhoff 217.782.0085

Attorney General's Office
Robyn Ziegler, 312.814.3118
rziegler@atg.state.il.us

GOVERNOR SIGNS MEASURE UPDATING ILLINOIS STALKING LAWS

Springfield, IL— A measure designed to give Illinois law enforcement officials more tools to combat stalking was approved this week by Governor Pat Quinn.

House Bill 2542, an initiative of Attorney General Lisa Madigan, effectively strengthens Illinois stalking and cyberstalking laws to better protect victims of web-based stalking crimes. Senator Toi Hutchinson and Representatives Karen Yarborough and Fred Crespo worked with Attorney General Madigan to pass the proposal through the legislature.

“Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable incident 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. This new law gives victims greater protection and law enforcement better tools to prosecute and, ultimately, prevent incidents of stalking.”

House Bill 2542 effectively broadens the definition of stalking by criminalizing behaviors that clearly cause victims fear or emotional distress even if there has been no personal contact. Recognizing that not all stalking behaviors involve threats of bodily harm, the legislation establishes a procedure for victims to obtain a “stalking no-contact order.” Previous 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.

“This law will make it easier for victims to know what acts constitute as stalking and provide evidence against their stalker,” Senator Hutchinson said. “Also, with technology constantly advancing, stalkers are finding new ways to harass their victims. We must advance the laws to keep up with new technology.”

The new law covers current and future technologies that stalkers may 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.

“Victims of stalking and members of law enforcement need every option available to protect themselves and their families, and this new law not only brings the criminal code up-to-date with existing technologies, it puts law enforcement ahead of the game by covering future cyberstalking methods,” Yarborough said.

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“The more than one million victims of stalking every year are not only subject to fear and intimidation tactics, they are also far more likely to be physically or sexually abused by their stalkers,” state Rep. Fred Crespo said. “As a lawmaker and a father of two young daughters, I want to do everything possible to give victims and law enforcement the tools they need to put a stop to stalkers and prevent violent crimes against women before they happen.”

The crimes of stalking or cyberstalking are considered a Class 4 Felony with one to three years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

“People should be punished accordingly for making others live in fear,” Hutchinson said. “I’m proud that we have taken a strong step in making our 20th century criminal code match the 21st century crimes we face.”