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ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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CONTACT:

Lucio Guerrero

312/814.3158

David Rudduck

312/814.3158

Governor Blagojevich signs legislation to increase protections for domestic violence victims

Cindy Bischof Law allows courts to order that abuser wear GPS tracking device as condition of bail in stalking situations

CHICAGO – Joined by a bipartisan group of state legislators, domestic violence prevention advocates and the family of domestic abuse victim Cindy Bischof, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed legislation to strengthen protections for domestic violence victims from their abusers. Senate Bill 2719, sponsored by State Senator Susan Garrett (D-Highwood) and State Representative Suzanne Bassi (R-Palatine), allows the courts to order an abuser to wear a GPS tracking device as a condition of bail in instances when a restraining order has been violated.

The legislation was sparked by the tragic event surrounding the death of Cindy Bischof whose ex-boyfriend was able to obtain a gun and shoot her in the parking lot of her real estate business, even after he had been arrested and prosecuted for violating a restraining order on two occasions.

“It is with a heavy heart for the Bischof family that I sign this legislation to enhance our state’s protections for domestic abuse victims,” said Governor Blagojevich. “The loss of their daughter was a terrible tragedy, but the Bischof family has used the heartbreak of her death to protect others like Cindy, who live in fear of their abuser. With this legislation, we will further help victims of domestic violence by monitoring their abusers whereabouts and aiding law enforcement in tracking violations of a restraining order.”

The law is effective January 1, 2009.

In a domestic violence case, if a domestic abuser is arrested for violating a restraining order and appeals for bail, the Cindy Bischof Law requires that the abuser must undergo a risk assessment evaluation and gives the court authority to require a GPS device be worn if bail is granted. In addition, the court must order the abuser to be evaluated by a partner abuse intervention program and order the respondent to follow all recommendations. The law also establishes an abuser’s failure to attend and complete a partner abuse intervention program as a new offense if the restraining order is violated.

The new law also adds at least a \$200 additional fine to every penalty on a violation of a restraining order conviction. The fines will be deposited into the newly established Domestic Violence Surveillance Fund.

“Our family, friends, and foundation thank the General Assembly and the Governor for acting quickly and decisively to pass this legislation which will go a long way toward helping victims of domestic violence maintain some semblance of freedom from their offender in stalking situations,” said Michael Bischof, brother of Cindy Bischof.

Finally, the bill establishes the Domestic Violence Surveillance Program where the supervising authority over the abuser (whether it is the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Patrol Review Board or the court) will use the most modern GPS technology to track domestic violence offenders and defines what capabilities the GPS tracking system must have. The Division of Probation Services must establish all standards and protocols to implement the program.

The Governor was joined today at the Jane Addams Hull House by Illinois House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R-Plainfield), State Senator Susan Garrett (D-Highwood), State Representative Michael McAuliffe (R-Chicago), State Representative Patricia Bellock (R-Westmont), State Representative Dennis Reboletti (R-Addison), family and friends of Bischof Family, Assistant State’s Attorney Ketki Steffan of the 3rd Municipal District, Denise Snyder of the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Assault, Maria Pesquiera of Mujeres Latina en Accion, and other advocates who provide assistance for domestic violence victims.

“Here today we honor the memory of Cindy Bischof by helping to protect battered women from their abusive stalkers. I am pleased to stand here with this bipartisan group to witness the signing of this important legislation,” said House Minority Leader Cross.

“The Cindy Bischof Law will help law enforcement officials protect families through use of GPS systems, strengthen existing laws for protecting families, and may save lives,” said Senator Garrett.

“It was my honor to be a part of drafting and passing this important piece of legislation which will provide a much greater degree of protection for victims of domestic violence than has thus far been the case,” said Representative Bassi who was out of the state for the bill signing.

The legislation signed by the Governor is similar legislation passed in Massachusetts last year which tracked domestic abusers with GPS and used GPS to enforce protection orders against convicted abusers. Until today, GPS use in Illinois has been only utilized by the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice to track sex offenders.

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