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Local

Illinois plan considers tracking offenders by satellite

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Current rank: # 111 of 7,998

SPRINGFIELD, III. -

[Michael Bischof](#) has had little time to mourn since his older sister's ex-boyfriend shot and killed her six weeks ago.

Instead, he's been doing his best to get [Illinois](#) legislators to increase protections for other victims of domestic abuse by using the latest technology.

The Illinois House has already voted to let judges turn to global positioning devices to track the whereabouts of people who have violated orders of protection. The goal is to alert authorities and victims if a potentially violent person has come too close.

Bischof has met with lawmakers, recounting the last terrifying months of [Cindy Bischof's](#) life to the [House Judiciary Committee](#). The 40-year-old [Barrington](#) resident also set up a Web site to help other victims of domestic violence.

"All credit goes to my sister," he said. "As her only sibling I see that the torch was handed to me in her memory to see to it that this could be a law that's passed to help women after her."

But the plan faces challenges as it heads to the Senate. Even if it becomes law, supporters point out they'll need to come up with state money for the program.

News reports indicate Cindy Bischof tried every conceivable measure to keep safe from [Michael Giroux](#).

She always kept mace nearby and hung a panic button around her neck. She filed for a protective order after he broke into her [Arlington Heights](#) home and spray-painted the walls and furniture. She hid from house to house, hotel to hotel, after he tried to hang himself on her patio.

But it wasn't enough.

Giroux ambushed and gunned down Bischof March 7 at the [Elmhurst](#) real estate office where she worked before turning the .38-caliber revolver on himself.

"This was a lady who did everything right and he still killed her," said [Rep. Suzanne Bassi](#), the Palatine Republican who sponsored the House legislation.

The GPS tracker idea came after Michael Bischof went through his sister's accordion folder filled with domestic violence research and stalking laws that she carried into each court date. She requested that officials fit Giroux with a tracking device late last year, but judges said they didn't have the authority.

"There's a hole in the law there that did not provide that as a possibility for domestic violence situations in Illinois," Bassi said.

Bassi said [Mike Bischof's](#) effort has put a spotlight on the domestic violence issue, but she also points to [Sofia Garcia](#), whose body was found in her [Chicago](#) home Monday. Police have issued an Amber Alert for her three children.

Garcia, 30, had an order of protection against [Benito Casanova](#) at the time of her death. Police say they are looking for and want to talk to Casanova, described as Garcia's boyfriend or husband, and believe he picked the children up from school on Friday.

Modeled after a pilot program in [Massachusetts](#), victims and police are alerted when an offender gets too close to the victim's home or workplace. The tracking system would only be used on people who have previously violated court orders, with a judge making the final decision.

But paying for the devices is a key question. Bassi suggested the money could come from court-ordered fines and federal grants.

Sponsoring [Sen. Susan Garrett](#) hopes the plan serves as a deterrent for would-be violators but acknowledges the cost concern.

"From what I understand, these electronic monitors are \$25 per person," said the [Lake Forest Democrat](#). "To make this work we've got to make sure we've got the money in place."

[Harvard Law](#) professor [Diane Rosenfeld](#), who helped craft the bill, said seven states already use electronic monitoring for order of protection violators.

One option for Illinois is a tracking device service that notifies the offender if they cross a preset boundary, she said. If the offender continues past the boundary, a monitor will warn the victim, call police and pinpoint the offender's location.

Rosenfeld estimated the costs to be about \$10 a day that can the offender could pay through a court-ordered fine.

"\$10 a day not that much for the safety of a battered woman," she said. "It's about changing balance of this situation."

[Jacqueline Ferguson](#), from the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Violence, said momentum from Cindy Bischof's death has helped push the bill forward but it will take a commitment from authorities to ensure it's put to work.

"Illinois has some of the best laws in this country dealing with domestic violence," Ferguson said. "But it's only as good as the implementation. And in some of our jurisdictions, implementation at various levels are bad."

For Michael Bischof, the electronic monitoring program is a necessary technological evolution to protect victims of domestic violence. He vows to continue to fight until the law changes.

"We can't take back what happened but we can affect the future and prevent it from happening to others," he said.

"To let my sister die like that without something positive coming out of it would be outside the realm of who I am."

The bill is HB3038

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