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GPS could track violators

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An initiative in Springfield would give domestic-violence victims more faith in the justice system with the help of modern technology, a local lawmaker said.

The Cindy Bischof Domestic Violence Law passed the Illinois House this month and awaits Senate approval.

Rep. Tim Schmitz, R-Batavia, backs the bill – named for a woman shot last month outside her Elmhurst office by an ex-boyfriend who apparently stalked her for months.

If the bill becomes law, judges could order offenders who have violated orders of protection to wear a GPS tracking device.

A victim would be given a portable device that would show where the offender is, Schmitz said.

Schmitz and other supporters say it's a necessary safety precaution, while others say it could violate privacy issues.

Bischof, of Arlington Heights, had an order of protection against Michael Giroux, who violated that order before fatally shooting Bischof and then himself.

"It was amazing what [Bischof] had to go through, and then this is how it turned out," Schmitz said.

Schmitz points out that the law is only for those who have violated orders of protection, and that a judge has discretion on whether the device is appropriate.

"This isn't going to go on anybody. It's for guys who violate," he said. "These people have already shown ... they want to violate the order."

Kane County prosecutor Lisa Accardi heads the State's Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Unit.

She supports the measure – and wants it to go even further.

"It would be wonderful if this could be added as a stipulation in a bond condition," Accardi said, adding that there often was long lengths of time between the accusation of a violation and when a judge determines that the offender actually violated.

"It would be more useful as a tool as a pre-trial condition ... to ensure the safety of the victim," Accardi said.

However, Accardi doesn't think that the proposed law would affect many offenders. She estimated that it would apply to about 5 percent of those in her courtroom.

Pam Clemen, associate director of Mutual Ground in Aurora, agrees with Accardi, saying the proposal is a positive step but won't be sweeping and needs to go further.

"A victim would find that very helpful. Then it all depends on what police and the courts will do," Clemen said. "If he violates the victim's space, will it be more than a slap on the wrist? More than just a fine?"

Although the Illinois chapter of the ACLU isn't weighing in on the legislation, Geneva defense attorney D.J. Tegeler said he had concerns.

While Tegeler does not oppose the GPS device, he said the fact that a victim had access to an offender's

whereabouts could violate privacy rights.

He said monitoring should be left to court officials, which he said was sufficient.

"If you're on GPS and you're not supposed to be in an area, the court knows about it immediately and can take steps to correct the situation," Tegeler said.

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