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# Power of GPS behind orders of protection



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Karen Gill is a vice president at PHASE/WAVE and one of three people in Winnebago County who makes assessment recommendations for violators of orders of protections. A law was passed this year that gives judges the option of putting ankle bracelets on people who violate orders of protection.

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By Mike Wiser

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ROCKFORD — When it comes down to it, an order of protection is nothing more than a piece of paper that tells one person to stay away from another.

And while there are consequences for breaking the boundaries described in the order, a piece of paper does little to stand in the way of someone who is intent on getting to someone else.

But a state law that took effect this year will bring new resources to bear on the system, including satellites and 24-7 live monitoring.

And that comes at a cost of at least tens of thousands of dollars to local taxpayers.

Known as the Bischof law, it provides that anyone who violates an order of protection could get clamped with a Global Positioning System ankle bracelet and have their movements monitored by contractors who would call police when person A gets too close to person B.

"To some (an order of protection) might just be ... a piece of paper," said Rockford police Detective Sgt. Eric Bruno, who heads the city's domestic violence squad. "Bischof addresses that problem, to an extent."

He said the new law gives police another tool to possibly prevent a crime before it happens.

"I can think of three cases right off the top of my head where having this would have made a difference," he said.

"I can't give you names because these are current cases that are under investigation, but these are three I can think of where — while thankfully none of them had serious physical violence occur — might not have happened at all."

### Cindy Bischof

The law is named after Cindy Bischof, 43, an Arlington Heights woman who was killed by her ex-boyfriend, Michael L. Giroux, on March 7 in a murder-suicide.

Bischof had obtained an order of protection against Giroux, but he also had been arrested three times for violating that order.

After her death, Bischof's brother and three of her longtime friends started the Cynthia Bischof Memorial Foundation, an organization aimed toward raising awareness of domestic violence issues and pushing legislation like the monitoring law.

The law says that anyone who is arrested for violation of an order of protection has to have an evaluation conducted to determine how likely they are to violate the order of protection again as well as an individual's propensity for violence.

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That information is passed on to the judge before the arrested individual appears on the violation charge. Then, taking into consideration the assessment, the judge can order the violator to wear a GPS bracelet.

"There are several indicators that we use," said Karen Gill, a vice president at PHASE/WAVE, who is one of three people in the 17th Judicial Circuit qualified to conduct the assessments.

"Substance abuse, the presence of life stressors, other types of behavior ... all of it is taken into consideration."

Gill said 11 assessments have been made in Boone and Winnebago counties since the law took effect. Of those, three were deemed "low-risk," two were "medium-risk," and five were "high-risk."

She said she is especially concerned because unemployment and financial stress are two of the factors most relevant to predicting whether someone could be a danger to another person and "with the economy the way it is, that is just a concern."

Still, while some systems are in place here, like assessment teams, not everything is — like the monitoring bracelets themselves.

"This was signed into law in, I believe, less than a year. That is extraordinarily quick by the speed of Illinois politics," Winnebago County Circuit Judge Rosemary Collins said.

"It didn't really give a lot of people time to get ready for it, and that's where, I think, we are now."

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Since 2002, Winnebago County judges have issued an average of 1,600 orders of protection a year each year.

The number of times those orders have been violated isn't as easily tracked because of the way court cases are filed in the system. So as of right now it's hard to determine how much money taxpayers will be spending to comply with the law.

"It might be a good thing," Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen said, "but it's another example of an unfunded mandate from Springfield. ... They pass these laws but don't include any mechanism to help the counties cover the cost of paying for it."

Christiansen said it's roughly \$200 for each risk assessment the county ends up having to do, but the big cost will come when people start getting fitted for ankle bracelets and they have to be tracked.

Dennis Meyers, who heads the county's probation department, has worked out some rough figures of what it would cost to contract with a company that monitors the movements of the bracelet-wearers.

"These are very preliminary because we don't know what the need is going to be," he said. "I hesitate to even put them out there, but we've said anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for the first year."

The two main reasons for such a wide range in cost, Meyers said, are that first, it's not clear how often judges would order a bracelet, and second, it's not clear how many of those who get bracelets will be indigent.

"The law provides that if a person can pay for the cost of their bracelet, then the court can order them to do that," Meyers said. "Basically, they'll have to pay a per-day rate for each day that they have to wear it."

The final cost also will depend on what type of package the county contracts for. Meyers said he's seen a wide range of options from simple systems that basically provide locations of a subject's movements during a certain time period to more sophisticated systems where programmers can designate certain zones — like someone's school, work or home — as off-limits and the GPS will send an instant signal if those zones are breached.

As a practical matter, Bruno said, monitors could call police who could be dispatched immediately to stop someone who is actively violating the order of protection and the tracking information could be used as evidence in court.

"This is a good step in the right direction," said Collins, who in addition to being a judge chairs the 17th Judicial Circuit Court Family Violence Coordinating Council and has done other work to raise awareness of domestic violence issues.

"It doesn't cover everything. There are still a lot of issues that need to be addressed, ... but this will be a huge help."

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make the person wearing the monitor pay for the service. it will cut the cost down for the tax payer. indigent or not, make them pay.

put the bracelet wearers on public service jobs: picking up trash, mowing lawns whatever needs doing on public tax supported land. don't make it easy for someone wearing the monitor.

**Juice**

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Absolutely make them pay for the cost of the WHOLE sysytem. Not the taxpayers! They make DUI people pay for the 'blow device' on their cars and the monthly 'maintenance'. I don't think the subcontract tracking part is necessary. A computer program should be able to tell if someone goes out of their zone and then make them pay a heavy fine or add a longer sentence or maybe real jail time. If they are under house arrest there is a greater risk of drug abuse etc. but let them pass a drug test to be released. Taxpayers are getting sick of paying

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for all the losers in society!

**sictired**

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I agree with the two preceding comments. If we were to make people actually responsible for their own wrongdoings maybe the 'insane' would become at least 'partially sane' If they committ the crime why is it our responsibility to carry the burden? I am so very tired of that. They should have to pay it ALL and the publice service jobs is a great idea, the problem is that the ones with the great ideas are not the ones with the ability to enforce them. Once again.

**DaForce**

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Right off the top it appears that this program is impractical. In the case of the murder/suicide mentioned above, if someone is intent on such a crime it would be very easy to remove the bracelet and go and commit the crime before anyone had the time tto intervene and stop it.

And what happens if a person leaves his/her zone? The monitoring agency calls the police and expect them to respond immediately to somewhere in the county to try and find the offender who may be driving in heavy traffic, through numerous different police jurisdictions, in a vehicle that the police have no description of.

And how accurate is the GPS system being used - 30yards, i/4 mile or what. Couple that with the monitoring agency having to provide constant updates relayed through a dispatcher to a police officer and it leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Do we set up roadblocks and check the identification of all the vehicle occupants?

If the intent is also to alert the monitoring agency when person A comes to close to person B as mentioned, how would that work? It would require the victim or petitioner to also wear a bracelet and be monitored or they would not be able to determine it the two are getting together. Suppose the petitioner is in a mall and the offender also decides to go the to do some shopping. Nothing illegal about that, but the police would have to get involved, how would you locate them in the mall when all the police have is a general physical description, i.e., white male, 5'10', brown hair, hazel eyes, no clothing description in a mall with thousands of people constantly moving around.

It just leaves me with many unanswered questions. Laws are fine, but the bottom line is that if they are not practical and enforcable they are worthless, expensive, and give the victim a false sense of security.

Even in the above cited case, the offender was arrested for three previous violations and released, so whats the point of the whole process? I know there is a problem that must be addressed but passing a law like this will not solve it.

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