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A good anti-stalker law, if Illinois gets it right

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Cindy Bischof, an Arlington Heights real estate agent, went to court and got an order of protection against her stalker ex-boyfriend, Michael Giroux, but a piece of paper can't stop anybody.

In March, he shot her to death. Then he killed himself.

Cindy Bischof left a poignant legacy, however -- a better way to protect other women in Illinois who find themselves in the same terrifying situation.

Bischof had suggested to the judge in her case a great idea: Slap a GPS satellite device on Giroux's ankle to keep track of him. If he again violated the court's order of protection, stalking her in those forbidden places where she worked and lived, he could be picked up and jailed. And then perhaps Cindy could take a shower without first having to check that her mace and cell phone were nearby.

The judge back then had no authority to grant such a request, but judges soon will. Last week, Gov. Blagojevich signed the Cindy Bischof Law, allowing judges to require those who disregard restraining orders to wear GPS tracking devices while out on bail. The same mapping device that can find lost cars from outer space will keep an eye on dangerous domestic abusers. Similar laws have been enacted in 11 other states.

The Illinois law goes into effect on Jan. 1, giving the state a little more than four months to get it right.

Getting it right means finding state money to help pay for the technology and manpower; don't leave local authorities holding the bag. The state is seeking federal funds, but Blagojevich and the state Legislature must do more to make sure this law is fully and properly paid for. The law provides for the creation of a Domestic Violence Surveillance Fund, which will help. The fund will use fines levied in domestic violence cases to help offset the \$9.30-a-day cost to monitor violators.

Getting the law right also means investing in the best available GPS-tracking technology. The best devices can automatically text, phone or e-mail alerts to victims of domestic violence when a stalker breaches a forbidden area. Some devices also include phones, allowing the police to speak directly with offenders.

We are all too familiar with stories of women who obtained orders of protection -- a court order to one person to stay far away from another person -- only to see the reign of terror continue.

You might remember Maritza Baez, who had an order of protection. Her estranged husband shot her dead in 2002 as she sat in a car on Milwaukee Avenue. Then he went to a restaurant for ribs.

You might remember Ronyale White, who had an order of protection. Her estranged husband shot her dead in 2002 after she called 911 -- to no avail -- four times.

But if done right, the Cindy Bischof Law might finally make orders of protection mean more than the paper they're printed on. In Massachusetts, where there is a similar law, a three-year pilot study of 42 high-risk stalker cases found that only two men violated court orders of protection. Just the threat of being cuffed with a GPS device, the study found, was a strong deterrent.

In Illinois, a private monitoring center will track offenders by GPS and call the police when a boundary is breached. Violations will be handled like 911 calls

The Cindy Bischof Law is designed to place the burden of keeping track of one's whereabouts where it belongs -- on the stalker. For too long -- really, forever -- it has been the victims who have been forced to change their lives, no longer going here or there, hiding indoors, refusing to answer the door, buying guns.

"She did everything right," said Diane Rosensfeld, a Harvard University Law School lecturer who helped the Bischof family push Cindy's law. "The system hasn't been set up to keep the responsibility on him."

Now it has -- if the state gets it right.

[Loser Stalkers, Domestic Offenders Get GPS Treatment In Michigan](#)

From GPS Obsessed

[New Michigan Law Requires Paroled Stalkers to Wear GPS Device](#)

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