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## Cindy Bischof's legacy

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One of the most problematic truths about domestic violence is that the risk of abuse rises dramatically when the victim decides to get out. Criminal justice experts even have a term for it: separation assault.

The victim—most of the time it's a woman—may be stalked, harassed, threatened or attacked by an estranged partner. The Chicago Women's Health Risk Study found that in 45 percent of murders in which a man killed a woman, the attack was precipitated by the woman's attempt to leave. A protective order—a judge's instruction to one partner to stay away from the other—sometimes makes the batterer so angry that the violence escalates.

That's what happened with Cindy Bischof, an Arlington Heights real estate broker who was killed by an ex-boyfriend who had violated a protective order at least twice. Michael Giroux spent two months in jail for the second violation. After his release, he showed up at Bischof's Elmhurst office and shot her dead in the parking lot before turning the gun on himself.

Bischof's grieving family turned their tragedy into a legacy. On Monday, Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed the Cindy Bischof Act, which allows a judge to order a person charged with violating a protective order to wear a satellite tracking device that alerts police and the alleged victim when a court-imposed boundary is breached.

Would the device have saved Bischof's life? It's hard to say. An attacker who is bent on doing harm before killing himself, as Giroux was, clearly has little regard for the law or its consequences. But Bischof would have been warned that Giroux was in the area, and police might have been able to intercept him.

Proponents of the devices, now used in domestic violence cases in 12 states, say their greatest value is in preventing such encounters in the first place. For most would-be attackers, the ankle bracelet alone is sufficient deterrent, especially since it provides police with clear evidence of any violation.

Fathers' rights groups are wary of the plan because it allows for 24-hour electronic surveillance even

if the subject hasn't been convicted of a crime. Those groups argue that some judges issue protective orders as a matter of routine, without exploring whether such a breach of privacy is warranted. Women and their advocates counter that protective orders are not vigorously enforced. Police sometimes are dismissive of their complaints or simply don't have enough evidence to make an arrest.

Unlike the laws in some other states, Illinois' new measure doesn't kick in when the order of protection is issued. A judge can order the tracking device only after a violation is charged. Failure to attend a court-ordered partner abuse intervention program qualifies as a violation that can trigger the requirement to wear a bracelet.

Those seem like reasonable steps to ensure that the devices aren't overprescribed. Used judiciously, they can add some teeth to protective orders while providing victims another layer of security.

Cindy Bischof took every legal step available to protect herself, and the law failed her. Thanks to her family, other potential victims will have a fighting chance.

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