



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY
MADISON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Thomas D. Gibbons
State's Attorney

157 North Main Street
Suite 402
Edwardsville, Illinois 62025

Voice: 618 692-6280
Facsimile: 618 296-7001

Contact: Stephanie Smith
618/692-6280

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 7, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville – Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons is working with State Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton), State Representative Dan Beiser (D-Alton) and Regional Superintendent of Schools Robert Daiber to advocate on behalf of legislation that would assist school districts in developing a comprehensive prevention and intervention policy to eliminate bullying from the classroom.

"Bullying continues to be a problem with serious consequences for the safety and well-being of our children and their academic experience," Gibbons said. "This legislation tackles an important aspect of the problem by making comprehensive anti-bullying and cyberbullying policies the standard in our schools. We must go beyond the mandatory minimum and take proactive measures to address bullying through prevention, education, and training before we find ourselves dealing with a tragic situation."

House Bill 5290 requires all Illinois schools to develop new anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying measures to be implemented by the fall 2013. Under the new bill, the Illinois State Board of Education would develop a model for anti-bullying policies that individual school districts and schools could then adapt and adopt. Schools would also be required to periodically update anti-bullying policies and to collect data about bullying incidents.

"We must provide students with an environment conducive to learning and free of bullying," Haine said. "By recognizing this growing issue in our schools, we can move forward with policies that combat this problem and ensure that students have the opportunity to prosper in an academic setting absent of threatening and harmful behavior."

"By improving state law to include e-mail, text messaging and social media under the definition of bullying and passing a law allowing school administrators to suspend a student who threatens another student over the internet, my colleagues and I in the General Assembly have always strived to make our schools secure places where children can thrive," Beiser said. "These measures have helped, but the fact is, bullying is still a problem in our schools. We must act to ensure all children are able to learn and grow in an environment free from psychological and physical harm."

Daiber said the proposed legislation reflects the need to review and revise anti-bullying policies as new situations and circumstances arise.

"Regional superintendents work closely with their local school districts to make sure each district has a bullying policy in place and that the policies are being observed," Daiber said. "We encourage

local school districts to report any instance of bullying so that we can better prevent and respond to future situations.”

Gibbons believes the new law will encourage more schools to go beyond the minimum requirement of the existing law and develop comprehensive anti-bullying policies that treat the cause and symptoms of the problem.

“Many local schools have shown great success through regular bullying prevention activities and training teachers in bullying prevention and intervention best practices, but the current laws set only a mandatory minimum,” Gibbons said. “As districts set higher standards and develop more effective methods we will see our teachers and students gain the tools to prevent bullying and intervene effectively before the situation gets out of control and becomes a law enforcement issue.”

###