

July 27, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, the STALKERS Act of 2010 makes a number of changes in the United States Code with respect to the offense of stalking. It clarifies, strengthens, and enhances the current law.

First it allows law enforcement to intervene in cases where a victim may not be aware of the seriousness of the threat before it's too late. The existing statute requires a person have reasonable fear of bodily injury or to undergo emotional distress. These injuries are difficult to demonstrate, often frustrating both victims and prosecutors.

H.R. 5662 addresses this problem by permitting law enforcement to intervene in any event of stalking that might reasonably be expected to cause another person serious emotional distress. This small change will go a long way towards both effective law enforcement and justice for victims.

Second, the bill reaches criminals who make use of new technologies to stalk their victims. It extends the law to any course of conduct in or substantially affecting interstate commerce, which will apply to cyberstalking, acts of surveillance and other forms of stalking that employ emerging technologies.

Third, the bill takes several steps towards more effective enforcement of the Federal stalking statute and other stalking laws. It increases the maximum term of imprisonment by 5 years if a criminal violates a protection order or if the victim is under the age of 18 or over the age of 65.

The bill also requires the Attorney General to conduct a annual study of best practices and enforcement of stalking laws nationwide. In short, this legislation updates current law to target the full range of behavior that stalkers direct towards their victims. It will help law enforcement seek justice, help victims seek closure, and increase protections of the most vulnerable amongst us.

I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. *Loretta Sanchez*) for her hard work and advocacy on behalf of victims of stalking. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan legislation.