



*Nothing is politically right  
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE  
JEFFERSON CITY

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is the firmest friend of truth.*

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## **Senate Supports Legislation to Address Cyber Stalking, Cyber Harassment Laws *Sen. Rupp's Bill Stiffens Penalties, Expands Definitions***

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JEFFERSON CITY — Stiffer penalties and expanded provisions to strengthen Missouri's stalking and harassment laws to include cyber-related communications, proposed under legislation sponsored by Sen. Scott T. Rupp, R-Wentzville, received first-round approval by the Missouri Senate this week.

Sen. Rupp's bill (SB 818) seeks to bolster law enforcement's efforts to keep a watchful eye on those who engage in this criminal activity and to deliver a heavy hand to those who make the ill-fated choice.

"We need to do all we can to protect our citizens from this kind of senseless activity by punishing those who engage in it," Sen. Rupp said. "This is a growing, national problem and, by bolstering our current law, Missouri will be taking the lead in addressing it."

The case of Dardenne Prairie teenager Megan Meier, whose suicide in 2006 may have been influenced by a case of cyber harassment, was highlighted during a recent Senate hearing that considered changes to the current law.

The proposed legislation includes expanded definitions of stalking and harassment to include communications delivered by any means, which would include the use of computers and other electronic devices. In addition, changes include stiffer penalties for stalking and harassment — particularly for repeat offenders — and would make it a crime for adults to harass children who are 17 years of age or younger or who claim to be.

Another provision includes requiring school boards to create written policies for reporting instances of harassment and stalking on school property.

A second vote would send the bill to the Missouri House for similar consideration.

"The citizens of Missouri deserve to feel safe and protected from threats of intimidation or fear of this kind that can come from a variety of communication devices," Sen. Rupp said. "This legislation will deliver a strong message that we find this kind of behavior unacceptable, and if you're going to engage in it, you can expect to pay a heavy price."

More information about the bill is available at [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov). keyword search SB818.

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