



# SENATOR YVONNE WILSON

**District 9 – Capitol Building, Room 330 Jefferson City, MO 65101**

**For Release  
January 29, 2008**

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## Sen. Yvonne Wilson to Present Bill Targeting Cyberbullies

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Sen. Yvonne Wilson, D-Kansas City, continues her efforts to ensure the safety of all students in Missouri. She will testify in favor of Senate Bill 762 Wednesday afternoon, Jan. 30, before the Senate Education Committee. Sen. Wilson is scheduled to make her presentation at 2 p.m. in Senate Committee Hearing Room 1 on the first floor of the state Capitol Building.

Senate Bill 762 states that “each district's anti-bullying policy shall be founded on the assumption that all students need a safe learning environment.” Bullying, as defined in the legislation, means “intimidation or harassment that causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property. Bullying may consist of physical actions, including gestures, or oral, cyberbullying, electronic, or written communication, and any threat of retaliation for reporting of such acts.”

“As a veteran educator in the Kansas City School District, my top concern was always for the welfare and safety of my students,” Sen. Wilson said. “I have tried to get similar legislation passed in previous sessions. It’s unfortunate that this is an ongoing problem that has recently manifested itself in tragedy.”

In October 2006, 13-year old Megan Meier of Dardenne Prairie committed suicide after a boy she had been communicating with online began sending her cruel messages. The “boy” Megan thought she was corresponding with on MySpace was a fiction created by a neighbor’s mother, her 18-year old employee and 13-year old daughter. The story

was first reported in a suburban St. Louis newspaper last year and soon drew international attention.

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“I’ve have seen firsthand the pernicious effects of bullying at schools,” Sen. Wilson said. “Students cannot learn when they are afraid of their peers or afraid to go to school. Too often, bullying in school is dismissed as a phase kids will grow out of, or even as a right of passage. But the trauma of being victimized by a school bully can haunt a person for the rest of their lives, or result in a tragedy.”

According to the 2006 Missouri Student Survey, suicide is the third-leading cause of death among Missouri youths, ages 10 to 24. The report found 14-percent of Missouri high school students said they had thought about committing suicide in the past year.

Senate Bill 762 requires school district employees to report any instance of bullying of which the employee has firsthand knowledge. Each school district also will be required to train its employees in accordance with district policy regarding bullying and cyberbullying.

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