



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

# NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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**CONTACTS:**

Lucio Guerrero	312/814.3158
Brian Williamsen	217/782.7355
Patti Thompson (IEMA)	217/558.0546

## **Governor Blagojevich signs Campus Security Enhancement Act**

*Groundbreaking new law strengthens emergency response plans at all colleges and universities in Illinois*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Governor Rod. R. Blagojevich today signed the Campus Security Enhancement Act into law, making Illinois the first state to require all colleges and universities to plan for and practice their responses to emergencies of all natures. This law will ensure that response plans are developed in partnership with local emergency response agencies and mental health service providers.

“The tragedies that occurred on the Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University campuses provided an unfortunate reminder that colleges and universities are not immune to acts of senseless violence,” said Governor Blagojevich. “This new law sets Illinois apart in our efforts to make sure students and faculty members on college campuses are as safe as possible.”

Senate Bill 2691 creates the Campus Security Enhancement Act. Beginning January 1, 2009 all Illinois higher education institutions will be required to develop and exercise an all-hazards emergency response plan and an inter-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional campus violence prevention plan. State and local emergency management officials will assist with the development of these plans, as well as with training and exercises related to the plans. The Act also requires the development and implementation of a campus violence prevention committee and campus threat assessment team.

“Colleges and universities in Illinois have long recognized the importance of implementing measures to ensure the safety of their students,” said Andrew Velasquez III, Director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. “This Act will strengthen those efforts by ensuring consistency in their planning efforts and encouraging coordination with their local emergency response agencies.”

The Campus Security Enhancement Act incorporates several recommendations presented to Governor Blagojevich this spring by the Campus Security Task Force, a multi-disciplinary group created by the Governor in April 2007 following the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech University. The task force included representatives of 75 organizations from the response, mental health, legal, and higher education communities. Members focused on campus safety issues related to response, prevention and mental health, and legal issues.

In addition to the recommendations offered on those issues, the group's comprehensive 259-page final report also included a section outlining initial lessons learned from the response and recovery to the shootings at the Northern Illinois University campus in DeKalb in February.

"Unfortunately, as we learned all too well on February 14th, it is necessary for our colleges and universities to have emergency operations plans in place, including plans to respond to campus violence," said Northern Illinois University President John Peters. "I commend the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor for recognizing, through the passage of this Act, the importance of adequate campus security procedures and responses to protect our students, faculty and staff."

Governor Blagojevich continues to push for legislative approval of another task force recommendation that would create a \$25 million Campus Security Enhancement Grant Program. The program would make available funding for campus security response and violence prevention training programs, projects to enhance emergency communications, and planning and execution of campus-wide training exercises. Funding for this initiative is included in the proposed *Illinois Works* capital program.

SB 2691, which was sponsored by State Sen. John Sullivan (D-Rushville) and State Rep. Bob Pritchard (R-Sycamore), was unanimously approved by the Illinois House and Senate.

"As a parent of two children in college, I speak for all other parents who want to have the confidence that when they send their children to school, they will be safe," said Sen. Sullivan. "The Campus Security Enhancement Act will make sure our colleges and universities are prepared for a worst-case scenario."

"The recent campus tragedies illustrate the need for well-devised emergency preparation plans on university campuses," said Rep. Pritchard. "Faculty members and students deserve the maximum effort put forth by institutions of higher learning to ensure their safety, and this Act directly addresses that."