

STATEMENT OF ED MULLEN ON THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- The Problem

Domestic violence has a devastating effect on our community. Chicago Police receive a call from a domestic violence victim every six minutes. Often times, children are collateral damage to this violence, either by witnessing it or being subject to abuse themselves. Making a tragic situation worse, legal authorities expect domestic violence incidents to rise in the ailing economy. Chicago has been home to a number of high profile domestic homicides in recent months, including several where police had been called numerous times. The deaths of innocent women and children cannot be tolerated, nor can we allow Chicagoans to suffer ongoing physical and psychological abuse without help from their community.

While some service providers have initiated new and innovative programs to deal with domestic violence, funding for and access to services has decreased in recent years. Since 2003, domestic violence funding has trended downward, and 27 Illinois counties have lost their service providers. During the same time, convictions of domestic violence perpetrators have decreased from 19.8% to 13.4%.

Despite efforts in recent years to target high-risk abuse cases, including a new domestic violence courthouse, the system is overwhelmed. In Chicago, prosecutors do not have the resources to devote to high-risk abusers. Of 90 cases identified by Cook County prosecutors each week, the department can prosecute only 30 with the protocols established for high-risk cases.

All of this leads to women and children living lives in terror and desperation and an unforgivable loss of life. We can do better in protecting our citizens.

- Implementing Legislative Solutions

The State of Illinois has made significant progress in enacting legislation to confront domestic violence. In 2008 the legislature passed a new measure implementing GPS tracking of offenders who violate orders of protection – the same technology used to track sex offenders.

I will vote to fully fund legal reforms that help the victims of domestic violence protect themselves and their children from perpetrators. Electronic monitoring must be funded and implemented effectively. Prosecutions of high profile criminal cases cannot be neglected, and the progress made in developing effective responses to domestic violence cannot lay dormant without adequate resources. In addition, social services that

foster economic empowerment for survivors seeking to flee abuse have become all the more essential in these trying economic times.

I will also advocate for state programs addressing same-sex domestic violence. Statistics show that domestic violence occurs in a similar percentage of same-sex couples as it does in heterosexual couples, yet limited resources exist to address these issues, and domestic violence service providers are unable to reach those at risk. I will introduce legislation to provide training on same-sex domestic violence issues and funding to service providers to reach out to the LGBT community.