



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

## Senator Grisanti is First Western New York Lawmaker to Co-Sponsor & Support Cyberbullying Bill

MARK GRISANTI January 9, 2012

*Bullying in ANY form will not be tolerated*

New York State Senator Mark Grisanti is the first Western New York lawmaker to co-sponsor and support Senator Jeffery Klein's and his fellow members of the Independent Democrats Conference on legislation to crack down on cyberbullying in New York State.

The bill (S.6132) updates New York's stalking and harassment laws to cover electronic bullying. Additionally, it allows for criminal prosecution of particular cyberbullying incidents under New York's hate crime statutes.

The introduction of this legislation by Senator Klein comes in the wake of numerous bullying-related teen tragedies, most recently the death of a Staten Island teenager whose family members said took her own life amid constant cyberbullying attacks. Months earlier a high school student from Western New York took his own life due to cyberbullying.

"Cyberbullying is happening everywhere. We as a community have experienced its effects first hand in Western New York," said Senator Grisanti. "This legislation will allow prosecutors to prosecute these crimes and hopefully prevent any other tragedies from happening. Bullying in ANY form will not be tolerated."

The legislation would:

- Update the crime of Third Degree Stalking to include bullying of a youth by electronic communications.
- Add electronic communications to the means of which to commit the crime of Aggravated Harassment.
- Modernize the crime of First Degree Criminal Impersonation to include electronic communications.

Third Degree Stalking and Aggravated Harassment are both currently Class A misdemeanors punishable by up to one year in jail. The crimes are eligible to be elevated to felonies if they violate New York's hate crime statutes. First Degree Criminal Impersonation is currently a Class E Felony punishable by up to four years in prison.

"Technology is ever-changing, and our children need to be protected from the cowards who harass and bully someone by using a computer or a cell phone. I will do whatever I can in my conference to make this a top priority this legislative session," said Grisanti.

The National Crime Prevention Council reports that 43 % of all teens in the U.S. have been subjected to cyberbullying. That number jumps to 53% for Lesbian, Gay, bisexual and transgender youth.