



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Senator Klein, IDC, Release Cyberbullying Census - Push for Criminal Penalties as Part of Cyberbullying Package

JEFFREY D. KLEIN June 13, 2012

| ISSUE: **CRIME, EDUCATION, CIVIL, CRIMINAL, LAW**

*Miss New York Joins NY State Senators Klein, Ranzenhofer, and IDC in Releasing Results of Largest And Most Comprehensive Cyberbullying Census Ever Conducted*

*Nearly 10,000 NY Students Complete Survey; 70% Think Cyberbullying Should be a Crime*

**ALBANY, NY** – Alongside anti-bullying advocates Kaitlin Monte (Miss New York) and Jaimie Isaacs, Senator Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), Senator Michael Ranzenhofer (R-Erie/Genesee), and IDC members released results of a 9-month long cyberbullying student census. The census illustrates the breadth and scope of the cyberbullying epidemic in New York schools. Nearly 10,000 students, from 45 counties and from over 350 schools filled out the survey. The results were jaw-dropping.

While 68% of the students surveyed had either witnessed or been personally victimized by cyberbullying, fewer than 1 in 5 of these students ever reported the abuse to an adult. Why did the overwhelming majority of these students never report the incident? According the survey, most students were either too scared, embarrassed, or intimidated to do so.

The census also revealed students' attitudes towards solving the problem of cyberbullying. An overwhelming number of students—70%—said they would like to see cyberbullying **become a crime** in New York. Currently, the only pending bills that would actually make cyberbullying a crime in New York have been sponsored by Senators Klein (S.6132) and Ranzenhofer (S.6614A).

“Sometimes, what is obvious to our children should be just as obvious to us as lawmakers. Yes, we need greater education on the issue: but education is not enough. Any legislative solution must also make cyberbullying a crime in New York State once and for all,” **Senator Klein said.** “My bill will do just that, and would finally send a message to those students who do not fully realize the dangers of cyberbullying. That message is that if you relentlessly harass your peers and intend to cause them serious harm, you may face serious consequences.”

**Senator Klein also said:** “As a result of this survey, we can finally see the pervasiveness of cyberbullying in our schools. We owe these students an enormous debt of gratitude. Speaking up is never easy, but by doing so, lawmakers, parents, and teachers will finally have their voices heard.”

The survey also found that girls were twice as likely as boys to be cyberbullied by a close friend.

“The tragic consequences cyberbullying are all too familiar to the residents of Staten Island,” said Senator Diane Savino (Staten Island/Brooklyn). “Young girls across the state need to feel that they are protected. By making cyberbullying a crime, we can do just that.”

Senator David Valesky (D-Oneida) said, “Cyberbullying is clearly a problem across our state. By gaining a better sense of student’s experiences, we can zero-in on the most effective ways to educate students about its dangers and steer them away from any temptation to bully kids themselves.”

Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Orange) said: “Thanks to these brave young students, we can now make informed decisions about how to deal with the problem of cyberbullying. After reviewing student responses from across Westchester, Rockland and Orange counties, I’m more convinced than ever that we need to make cyberbullying illegal in New York State.”

The survey’s results come on the heels of news that lawmakers are hurrying to pass cyberbullying legislation before the end of this year’s legislative session on June 21<sup>st</sup>.