



# Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

BULLYING

## Look who is bullying now

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment March 10, 2011 11:15 AM

---

It has been over ten months since Gov. Deval Patrick signed the state's new anti-bullying law, a measure that passed unanimously in both legislative chambers. Apparently, there is growing [frustration on Beacon Hill](#), especially from Representative Marty Walz who crafted the legislation, over the dozens of schools and school districts that are late with their assignments.

As further encouragement, □ the identities of the non-compliant schools and school districts have been publicized. Although arguably it might be useful for parents whose children are enrolled in these schools to be alerted, the move to shame school administrators into compliance seems both premature and mean-spirited.

I understand and appreciate the sense of urgency. But these delays are also understandable given the onerous requirement of involving lots of folks -- from parents to the police -- in the planning process. It is disingenuous for state lawmakers to complain loudly and so publicly about such slowness. I recall testifying at a State House hearing back in early 2007 in support of an anti-bullying bill, but it took four years and the tragedy of suicide by a 15-year-old girl to get the Legislature to do its part. And maybe the tardy schools would already have had their plans in place had the Legislature not taken years to to complete their job.

The irony to this latest move to shame schools into compliance is that bullies themselves often use embarrassment as a tactic to coerce weaker people to obey their demands. And so I ask: Who's doing the bullying now?