



Monday, August 21, 2006, 4:45 pm

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News

Virginia Victim Notification Program To Expand

Local, Regional Jails To Be Included In VINE

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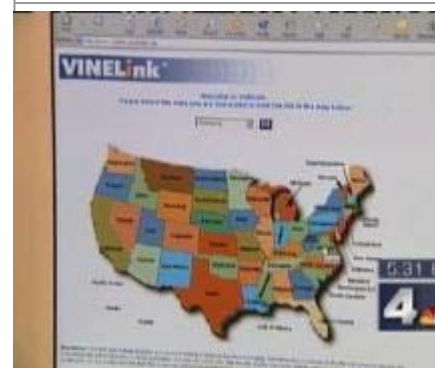
FAIRFAX, Va. -- A program designed to help crime victims know when their perpetrators are released from state prisons is expanding to include city and regional jails.

The program, Victim Information and Notification Everyday, or VINE, gathers data on prisoner transfers, bond hearings and releases. Computer technology scans prison and transmits a snapshot of the population to a database every 15 minutes, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine told The Associated Press in a telephone interview on Monday.

"Each institution agrees to have a record of who's there available every two hours," said Kaine, adding the system will take about two years to expand to 73 city and regional jails.

the expansion.

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Video: VINE Program Brings Security To Victims

Victims will be able to call a toll-free number to find out if an offender is in jail or register by phone to be notified when an offender is released, transfer or escapes, according to a press release. Kaine said victims also can receive emails.

About 24,000 people have signed up since 2002 when Kaine said the program was implemented on a limited basis in state prisons. Before then, Kaine said victims had to go a lengthy route that involved contacting several jails and prisons -- often ending up with old information or none at all.

A \$1.25 million federal grant will help expand the program, said John Jones, executive director of the Virginia Sheriff's Association, which is organizing

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The grant will cover the entire phase in. The system will cost the state about \$600,000 a year thereafter.

"It's going be helpful because victims will have access to real time information when the person who comm crime against them is released," Jones said. "They may need to take action to protect themselves."

The initiative was announced at the Fairfax County jail complex.

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