



## Senate passes Waugh bill to close 'Spotz loophole'

CARL LINDQUIST *The York Dispatch*

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The Pennsylvania Senate on Wednesday unanimously approved a local lawmaker's bill meant to close a loophole that allowed some criminals to avoid paying court costs.

State Sen. Mike Waugh, R-Shrewsbury, introduced legislation in mid-December to combat a recent a recent Commonwealth Court ruling involving convicted killer Mark Spotz.

The court last year decided court costs were improperly garnished from Spotz's inmate account because a judge failed to specifically order him to pay.

Defendants across the state have since used the ruling to avoid paying their own costs.

Waugh's legislation contains a provision that would impose costs even if a judge fails to specifically order them. The state Senate's approval sends the legislation to the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives.

"I just pushed and prodded and got enough members to help me support movement of the bill," Waugh said, adding his position in leadership as majority caucus chairman helped.

Similar legislation introduced by Rep. Keith Gillespie, R-Springettsbury, has failed to reach the state House of Representative for a vote.

York County Clerk of Courts Don O'Shell said the county is already out at least \$15,000 from 14 defendants because of the Spotz ruling.

"It closes this loophole defendants have taken advantage of since the Spotz case, so we're excited about it," O'Shell said.

Spotz was arrested after a four-day killing spree that began with the Jan. 31, 1995, shooting death of his brother, Dustin Spotz, after Dustin stabbed Mark twice. The violence erupted in their mother's Clearfield County home when Mark Spotz yelled at the son of Dustin Spotz's girlfriend for teasing Mark with a gerbil.

Spotz fled from police, killing three women during the course of carjackings over the next three days in Schuylkill, York and Cumberland counties, including New Salem resident Penny Gunnet, 41, on Feb. 2, 1995.

Waugh said he plans to meet with Democratic leadership in the House to help get the bill moved quickly to the governor's desk.

"It's a relatively simple fix in terms of changing the law, but it needs to be done quickly," he said.

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