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Crist signs act targeting violent offenders

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Gov. Charlie Crist marked his first major legislative victory Monday by signing into law a bill requiring judges to put violent offenders in prison for violating their probation.

The bill, known as the Anti-Murder Act, is expected to prevent such killings as the 2004 death of 11-year-old Carlie Brucia of Sarasota, who was abducted and killed by a man who had repeatedly violated his probation and had a violent past.

The governor celebrated the law's passage on a ceremonial bill-signing tour that took him to Tampa, Deltona and Fort Lauderdale before ending with the official signing in Tallahassee.

Crist was joined on the steps of Fort Lauderdale City Hall by *America's Most Wanted* host John Walsh, whose son, Adam, was murdered in Hollywood in 1981.

"This is going to empower judges that care, that want to keep these guys off the streets until their trial comes up," Walsh said. "And it'll force judges who don't have the guts to do it, to do it."

The new law will require violent felony offenders who violate probation to return to jail until a judge determines whether they pose a danger to the community.

The law, which went into effect Monday, creates a new designation for such people: violent felony offenders of special concern.

They would be immediately jailed if they were accused of violating probation or community control, and a judge would then determine whether they violated the terms of their supervised release and were dangers to the community. If so, the judge must send the offender back to prison.

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