

By Bob Hague for [Wisconsin Radio Network](#)

Legislation being considered at the Capitol would allow law enforcement improved access to juvenile court records. Governor Jim Doyle [vetoed similar legislation](#) in 2008 – citing privacy concerns. In Milwaukee in 2010, 18-year-old Markus Evans shot and killed 17-year-old Jonosha Alexander just before Christmas. Evans had a lengthy juvenile record, including time served for shooting his cousin in the back.

[An investigation by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)

revealed Evans had received light punishment in the juvenile justice system, despite a string of violent incidents “What I think Markus Evans learned, was he could get away with it, and there were no consequences.” says

[Senator Alberta Darling](#)

, the bill’s author.

[AUDIO: Bob Hague reports \(1:20\)](#)

Poor communication between law enforcement and the legal system have been cited in many cases like that involving Evans. “I think what we have is circumstances currently exist, inadvertently but nonetheless exists, where the left hand literally doesn’t know what the right hand is doing,” says Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn. “This also teaches lessons to young people — the wrong lessons.” Flynn notes Milwaukee saw a 48 percent increase in juvenile crime last year, and a 28 percent increase in arrests of juvenile robbery suspects, while arrests of adult robbery suspects declined slightly.

“In the first nine months of 2011, Milwaukee police arrested almost 2,500 juveniles for breaking the law,” says state [Representative Jon Richards](#) , a Milwaukee Democrat. “These are offenses that are very serious, often involving guns, often involving loaded guns.” Mallory O’Brien directs the [Milwaukee Homicide Review](#)

[Commission](#)

. She says 74 percent of criminal suspects in Milwaukee have juvenile records. “They (police officers) don’t have this information on the streets,” O’Brien says. “This level of information is really important for public safety in our communities.”

[AUDIO: Mallory O’Brien \(3:03\)](#)

Under current state law, the [office of the Director of State Courts](#) has established an automated information system, known as the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP), that contains information about cases filed in the circuit courts in this state, including courts dealing with juveniles. Those records are sealed, with limited exceptions. The bill permits the office to transfer juvenile records to law enforcement agencies – but doesn't specify a mechanism for doing that. Nancy Rotier, legislative liaison for the office of the Director of State Courts, raised some concerns about that. "Typically, when access to a confidential website is controlled by the people who set up the website, they set up user IDs and passwords in order to control that flow," she says. "Right now the court system operates with a user ID and password system, but we have less than 3,000 users. There are almost 20,000 full-time law enforcement officers in the state. We're not sure who, and how, this bill and the authors envision that access is going to be taken care of." She says costs to set and maintain such as system would be significant. "These things do cost money, and this bill does not provide any resources for us to do this. In the current biennium, CCAP is taking a cut of a million dollars in its budget."

[AUDIO: Nancy Rotier \(8:15\)](#)

The bill [\(SB 173\)](#) received a public hearing Wednesday before the state Senate's judiciary committee.