Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence
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HCGV NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2013

Legislation Notes

By Steve Dunlop
HCGV president

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Only 56 of 60 votes were available to override the filibuster against background checks and gun trafficking.

Even fewer override votes were available on assault weapons and large magazines.

STATE LEGISLATION

Gun sanity did better at the state house, where the bill to force state colleges to allow guns on campus was not heard and the one to force guns into schools failed.

Our coalition did, I think, influence U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly to vote in favor of expanding gun background checks and increasing penalties for gun trafficking. I want to thank all of you who contributed to this effort with your letters, e-mails and calls to Sens. Dan Coats and Donnelly, your letters to the editor, and your attendance at rallies.

I did get a letter into the Indianapolis Star on the guns in schools measure. In that one, I said I think we should be asking gun owners to pay for all additional safety measures as it is their insistence on the right to be able to terrorize us that is the problem.

I met with Sen. Coats' staff member Matthew Row, assigned to deal with gun policy. The staffer mentioned quibbles the senator had with the background checks bill, principally along the lines of veterans with post traumatic stress syndrome. The senator was worried about delays the veterans might have in buying guns. The staffer asked me to review the bill that Coats himself co-sponsored. That bill would do nothing to expand background checks, merely increase penalties for those who falsify themselves under the current system. People who falsify information don't get guns now and it isn't the sales that slip through the system that are the problem. It is the 6,000,000 that aren't screened at all.

On a national basis, there is hope that the background bill may be brought back before the Senate, and there is polling evidence that voting against it has hurt some senators.

Meanwhile, the shootings go on especially in Indianapolis, where the federal prosecutor is pledging to add resources to the fight. President Obama said at the dedication of the Martin Luther King Memorial, "Change has never been quick, easy, or without controversy. It requires persistence and determination." This is surely true for sane gun policy.

A Kaiser Health poll shows that one in five Americans knows someone who has been the victim of gun violence in the last three years: friends, family members or even themselves. 4 in 10 are afraid.

Neil Heslin, father of 6-year-old Jesse of the Newtown shootings, testified at Senate Judiciary Committee hearings. There were several heated exchanges during the session.

A parent: "As a mother I am deeply saddened by a parent losing a child to gun violence. We need strong gun laws to make sure firearms and military-style weapons don't get into the hands of criminals."

WHAT MARK KELLY (GABBY GIFFORD HUSBAND) SAID AT SHOOTER'S TRIAL

We have a political class that is afraid to do something as simple as have a meaningful debate about our gun laws and how they are being enforced. We have representatives who look at gun violence, not as a problem to solve, but as the white elephant in the room to ignore. As a nation we have repeatedly passed up the opportunity to address this issue.

Dan Carpenter, who has written many times in the Indianapolis Star about gun violence, was a part of the Star's editorial board which recently talked with Steve Dunlop, HCGV president. Carpenter's report in the Star (excerpted):

Mass Murder put gun regulation on the federal front burner, but Dr. Stephen Dunlop's quest for reform rests more on deaths that barely make the news, or not at all.

Dunlop is an Indianapolis psychiatrist who has seen suicides by patients he believes would be alive if they had not had access to firearms.

"I look at this from a public health point of view. I hate to see wasted lives," said Dunlop.

How much can the government do to save how many of those lives? At best, he conceded, "make it somewhat more difficult for guns to get into the wrong hands."

Even that achievement would be monumental from a political standpoint. We are talking about reviving a bill that failed in the Democratic-controlled Senate and would have no chance in the House.

Of the approximately 12,000 gun homicides in the U.S. last year, Dunlop said, about 5,000 claimed friends, relatives, acquaintances, or co-workers of the shooter. "These are not hardened criminals."

Continued on page 3

FACTS

Federal law does not require "private sellers" including unlicensed sellers at gun shows, to run a background check before selling a gun. An estimated 40% of gun sales are conducted by unlicensed "private sellers."

Federal law requires licensed firearm dealers to conduct background checks as buyers. Anyone who is engaged in the business of selling guns "must get a federal firearms license" though there is no clear definition of what it means to be engaged in the business of selling guns. Private sellers, including people making occasional sales or selling from a private collection are not required by federal law to conduct background checks.

California, New York, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C., require background checks at the time of purchase on all gun sales

Connecticut, Maryland and Pennsylvania require background checks on handguns only, not shotguns and rifles

Colorado, Illinois and Oregon require background checks at gun shows

continued from page 2

As for Second Amendment alarms, nobody aside from opponents of the legislation is talking about confiscating guns from the law-abiding.

"Guns kill nearly as many people as cars, and with less social benefit than motor vehicles," Dunlop said. "Guns don't make you safer; they are very likely to do the opposite."

Dunlop is no stranger to uphill politics. He knows all about the Republican U.S. House, the hiding Coats took in the GOP primary for his support of the assault weapons ban in the 1990s, the mountain of money behind the gun lobby.

"I hope," he said, "that we will look at this as a moral issue."

And he long ago learned a fact about the progress of moral issues. "It will take a long time."

Joining in the conference call was John Feinblatt, policy director for the nearly 1,000-member national coalition Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

Feinblatt said, "We all agree on the types of people who should not have guns. So why oppose background checks? No law is 100 percent perfect. We want to shut down the marketplace (for ill-advised sales.) Why not take that step to save a life?"

By David A. Love

With 90 guns for every 100 people and 270 million of the world's 875 million known firearms, according to the Small Arms Survey in Switzerland, the U.S. by far is the most heavily armed nation in the world. Yemen, in second place, has 61 guns per 100 people, followed by Finland with 56, Switzerland with 46, and Iraq with 39.

And not surprisingly, America has the world's highest gun-related death rate, with nearly 100,000 people shot or killed with a gun each year. Over a million Americans have been killed with guns since Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated, according to the Childrens' Defense Fund. Moreover, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence says that America's homicide rate is 6.9 times higher than rates in the other 22 advanced nations combined. And among 23 high-income countries, 80 percent of firearms deaths occur in the U.S.

This is a travesty and an embarrassment in the industrialized world. And with guns aplenty in a nation that is hungry, ill and need of repair, guns are readily available for the mentally unstable, domestic abusers, criminals and others who should be prohibited from having a gun. But what do you do when the county itself is sick? Guns Don't Kill People. Americans Kill People. Why?

About those five teenagers shot in Chicago

By Bob Sanders

Five teenagers were shot while they waited at a bus stop in Chicago. They ranged in age from 16 to 17 and were from the same school. One was in critical condition at last report.

What possesses someone to do that kind of a shooting?

"We were just walking home from school," said one of the teenagers. "They just came and started shooting at us."

In her frustration, a mother of one teenager co-founded an organization concerned with gun violence. She met with Vice President Joe Biden's task force to ask for help in finding some avenue to lessen gun violence.

President Obama has issued 23 executive actions toward curbing gun violence, They require action by Congress.

Among them:

(1) Force background checks on all gun sales.

(2) Reinstate the assault weapons ban on high-grade military-style weapons that expired in 2004.

(3) Renew a 10-round limit on the size of ammunition magazines.

(4) Prohibit the possession, transfer, manufacture and import of dangerous armor-piercing bullets.

(5) Pass gun-trafficking laws that would penalize people who help criminals get guns.

Our mission at Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence is clear. We must continue to seek public support for major change in gun use.

In his book, The Underground Church: Reclaiming the Subversive Way of Jesus, Robin Meyers makes the tongue-in-cheek observation::

"Real men practice the family values of empire, go on great crusades to protect their country and attach themselves to guns and gun ownership as a religious imperative!"

He asks, "Does the God revealed to you by Jesus compel you to live as a disciple of non-violence?" Surely the answer is obvious.

1. Detroit
2. Baltimore
3. Memphis
4. Philadelphia
5. Washington
6. Indianapolis
7. Milwaukee
8. Columbus (Ohio)
9. Oklahoma City
10. Houston

From the Editors

Listed above are what INFOPlEASE calls the most dangerous cities in America in 2013. Note that Indianapolis places sixth in this particular list.

Bob Sanders, Bob Friedly

MEMBERS

Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence has 155 members. A total of 70% of the membership is located in Indianapolis, but there also are members from Anderson, Avon, Bloomington, Carmel, Claypool, Elkhart, Fort Wayne, Greencastle, Greenfield, Hobart, Lafayette, Laporte, Lebanon, Muncie, Noblesville, N. Manchester, Schererville, Seymour, South Bend,, Zionsville, plus several out-of-state subscribers.

OFFICERS

President: Steve Dunlop

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HOOSIERS CONCERNED

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Annual dues for Hoosiers Concerned about Gun Violence: $25