



October 18, 2017

Gun Violence: Las Vegas and Chicago

Only 17 days ago, our nation was once again coming to grips with the tragedy of the mass shooting in Las Vegas, leaving 58 people dead and another 546 people injured in the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history. We cannot forget about what happened in Las Vegas. We know that the families that have been affected have not forgotten.

Twenty-three firearms, a large quantity of ammunition, and numerous high-capacity magazines capable of holding up to 100 rounds apiece were found in the gunman's suite. Bump fire stocks were found on twelve of the guns, which allowed for the recoil to actuate the trigger at a rate of 90 bullets in 10 seconds. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives determined the guns were legal and legally acquired by the gunman.

National figures have criticized renewed calls for gun controls by invoking the story of violence in Chicago, falsely stating that Chicago has the strictest gun laws in the country. According to the Tribune, law enforcement officials say that 60 percent of the guns confiscated on the streets of Chicago come from Indiana, Wisconsin, and Mississippi. The other 40 percent come from suburban Cook County and nearby suburbs. And the major problem on Chicago's streets is related to handgun violence, not mass shootings like that in Las Vegas. 75% of gun deaths in Chicago in 2010 were related to handguns, the last year data broken down by type of gun were collected.

On the streets of Chicago, the carnage continues, with 57 deaths that were ruled homicides last month (September 2017), with 488 shooting deaths this year ruled homicides, according to data kept by the Chicago Sun-Times.

Just as we must look in the mirror at ourselves to combat violence, we also have to work on practical solutions to make it easier for people to do the right thing and not resort to the violence of killing another person. And it makes sense that we need to advocate for certain policies to end gun violence in America.

That's why I recently filed legislation to reactivate the Illinois Firearms Public Awareness Task Force, which has not been active since 2012. This Task Force would be charged with: 1) reviewing the previous report compiled by the Task Force and discussing the effects that concealed carry might have had on the proliferation of crimes involving firearms; 2) shootings in Illinois by regions and what might be contributing to more shootings in one area of the state compared to others; 3) gun dealers and gun sales that may have led to illegal usage or straw purchases – this should include the number of guns and

ammunition sold and any registry concerning ammunition purchases; 4) the transportation of firearms, especially newly manufactured firearms as they are transported through Illinois –this should include the study of the repeated gun thefts at the Norfolk Southern Rail Yard; 5) mental health laws and treatments for those individuals who have access to firearms; and 6) current laws on handguns and rifles and the states with the best practices.

One way to look at solutions to prevent gun deaths would be to look at where experts and the public agree. A survey conducted by Bui and Sanger-Katz of the New York Times earlier this year asked social scientists, lawyers and public health officials how effective each of 29 policies would be in reducing firearm homicide deaths. They then surveyed 1975 voters who were asked whether they approved the possible laws.

The two policies ranked the most effective at preventing gun deaths were: 1) requiring all sellers to run background checks on anyone who buys a gun; and 2) barring gun sales to people convicted of violent misdemeanors, including domestic assaults. As it turns out, both of these policies were also the most supported policies by the public, being supported by more than 85% of registered voters.

Thinking of where guns in Chicago come from, no permit or license is required to buy a gun in Indiana. Furthermore, Indiana does not require private sellers (sellers who are not licensed dealers) to initiate a background check when transferring a firearm.

As professor and director of Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research Daniel Webster says, “We think of guns being an incredibly controversial topic, but what [their] polling show and ours has shown is there’s a whole lot of gun policies that really aren’t controversial.”

We are still trying to understand what happened in Las Vegas, and what happens in Chicago almost every day. But can we still reduce gun deaths by fighting for policies that are both effective and acceptable to the vast majority of people?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Shawn K. Ford', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District