



September 18, 2019

Illinois House Firearm Public Awareness Task Force

On September 13, 2019, Speaker Madigan established the Illinois House Firearm Public Awareness Task Force at my urging, and I was honored to be named Chair of this bipartisan Task Force. The Task Force “will review the issue of gun violence and make recommendations designed to reduce violence”.

Everyone says they have the statistics that show they're right with their ideas to make the streets safer. So now we're going to debate this extremely important issue and do everything we can. Too many people have died from gun violence, and I am very concerned with how schools, hospitals and other public areas have been the targets of gun violence. And, this hits very close to home. Just a few weeks ago, one of my family members was shot and killed on the West Side over Labor Day weekend. He was 15 years old.

Everyone has their beliefs on gun policies and how we should restrict or not restrict gun rights. This will be an open and honest discussion, where gun-rights advocates, who have already been reaching out to me, can speak their truth. Those who believe there are widely supported measures to curb violence and death due to firearms will be able to speak, too.

For example, some gun rights advocates are OK with background checks, but we need to very clearly understand what part of a person's background is being checked. We need to clearly respect person's right to privacy, but we also need to keep our communities safe by keeping guns out of the hands of those who really should not have them.

We will also look at bail reform and really look at the facts. Some worry that inmates with histories of gun violence are being released back on the streets, even though others have released statistics to show that this is not the case, and that those who are being released pre-trial have an extremely low chance of being charged with a violent offence.

The Task Force will also study Illinois' concealed carry firearm law to see if it needs to be modified, as I have heard concerns that gun violence has gone up since the law was enacted in 2013. Nationally, we're even hearing Republicans say we have to do something about these assault rifles. This is something we'll seriously consider in Illinois.

The Task Force will present its findings to all branches of government and offer opinions to municipalities, and the Task Force will likely draft a comprehensive, statewide omnibus bill on firearms. Please contact me at repford@lashawnford.com with your ideas and suggestions for the Task Force.

Sincerely,

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District