



Legislative Action

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For Immediate Release

February 10, 2017

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Colorado Citizens Speak Truth to their Leaders

On July 20, 2012 Colorado was rocked by the news the mass shooting at an Aurora Theater. Less than six months later, the entire nation grieved the shooting deaths of 20 first-graders and six educators. In response, the 2013 Colorado General Assembly enacted a set of common sense gun laws. But the gun lobby didn't sit idly by. They flooded the capitol with mail, and on one memorable day gun enthusiasts circled the capitol the entire day honking their horns while a plane flew overhead with a banner reading "Hick, don't take our guns." While inside the capitol it was bumper to bumper people.

Fast forward to Wednesday night's hearing on 3 gun bills, one of which was to repeal an ammunition magazine ban enacted in 2013. The room was filled to overflowing, but not with gun enthusiasts, but by moms, dads, business people and representatives of education and gun violence prevention organizations. On a bill to allow anyone with a Concealed Carry permit to enter a public school building carrying a hidden handgun, those who testified against the bill outnumbered the proponents by a ratio of 3 to 1.

Not only were proponents lacking in supporters willing to sit the 8-hour stint, but they came armed not with facts but disinformation.

- Representative Patrick Neville repeatedly mentioned that individual schools and school boards could adopt policies for his guns in schools proposal, a suggestion that he was making up out of whole cloth, as such an action is not allowed under statute 18-112-214, the Concealed Carry Law of 2003.
- A constitutional lawyer speaking for guns in schools referred to the 2008 Heller Supreme Court decision as applicable to schools, apparently not having read the entire decision which stated "Nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on ... laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places, such as schools and government buildings."
- Several gun rights advocates enumerated mass shootings which were stopped by armed civilians. In each of those cases (Appalachian State Law University, Clackamas Mall, Tucson, and New Life Church), the story is far murkier than portrayed and in several interveners not civilians, but actually active or former law enforcement.

In 2013 the gun lobby struck back at legislators who worked for the new laws and brought about the recall or resignation of 3 senators. With the 2016 election, all three of those seats are now back in the party of 2013.

Even the Rocky Mountain Gun Owners has lost its stranglehold on the Republican party. In

2012 RMGO worked in five primary races, and all their candidates won, even ousting two sitting Republican office holders. In 2016 the RMGO clearly had lost its steam. In the Republican primaries, only ½ of its candidates were victorious, and things weren't much better in the general election. Even their threats of ousting Daniel Thurlow of Grand Junction, who voted five times against some of the extreme gun proposals in 2015, went for naught. Thurlow drew no opponent in either the general or primary.

Wednesday night, three gun bills were rejected. The bills would have allowed guns in public schools, allowed business people to use deadly force without civil or criminal liabilities, and repealed the common sense 2013 ban on high capacity magazines. Sitting in the audience and speaking were persons who have lost loved ones in mass shootings, and others who didn't want to go through that same experience.

Colorado Ceasefire, an all-volunteer statewide organization, has been fighting for freedom from gun violence since 2000. Ceasefire initiated and was instrumental in the enactment of the 2013 Colorado firearms laws, which included universal background checks, a high capacity magazine ban, and domestic violence firearms relinquishment.

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