

"Close the Loop: Confronting Gun Violence and the Charleston Loophole"

Organized by: Organizing for Action – South Carolina

Hosted by: the Unitarian Church of Charleston

May 6, 2017

Observer: Kristen French, Ph.D.

"Close the Loop: Confronting Gun Violence and the Charleston Loophole" was held on Saturday, May 6th, at Gage Hall. This event was organized by Organizing for Action – South Carolina (FASC) and hosted by the Unitarian Church of Charleston.

Speaker/panelists addressed different aspects of gun violence.

- Jackie Shelley (Moms Demand Action) emphasized gun violence in domestic abuse and the "boyfriend" loophole in designating a violent crime as domestic abuse. This loophole also impacts background checks, which include a check for domestic abuse history.
- Merrill Chapman (President, The Brady Campaign) spoke about the renewed activism after the shootings at Mother Emmanuel. She also reported on visiting Sen. Tim Scott and other SC Congressional representatives in D.C. during the week leading up to May 6th to let them know how important reducing gun violence is to South Carolinians.
- Richard Hagerty, MD (Arm in Arm) emphasized that gun violence is a public health problem that must be addressed.
- Pastor Thomas Dixon (The Coalition--People United to Take Back our Community) also spoke on the issues raised.
- Sen. Marlon Kimpson, the keynote speaker, related the difficulties in moving legislation on background checks through the South Carolina Legislature. He spoke about his use of filibuster to negotiate for public hearings on the subject of gun violence around the state, and he related his struggle to extend the minimum waiting period for background checks before gun sales from 3 days to 5 days (he would like the minimum waiting period to be whatever time is needed to complete background checks) through [S.516](#), which would also require faster violent crime reporting from courts to SLED in order to improve accuracy of background checks. He also related that he has found it necessary to have a reduced presence on social media because of violent threats against himself and his family.

Questions & Answers Session:

1. During the Q&A, bill [S.516](#) was emphasized as needing massive and pro-active support from the citizens in order to pass it in January. It is still in the Judiciary Committee and Sen. Kimpson suggested that concerned citizens could consider coming to Columbia in January to demand hearings on the bill and to suggest even the "shut down" the state government, if necessary.
2. In addition, other legislation that is moving more quickly through the state legislature, such as the "open carry without a permit" bill needs to be watched carefully as calls for a vote on the floor could happen without warning.
3. One inquiry about strategy questioned why there is not a class action suit against gun manufacturers, and Sen. Kimpson reminded the attendees that the U.S. Congress passed a law about 20 years ago to make it illegal to sue gun manufacturers.