



In gun hearing Wednesday NRA witness lies, Gabby Giffords speaks

By: Robert Bowen - January 30, 2013

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on gun violence Wednesday to discuss various proposals for reducing the killing. A victim of gun violence begged the committee to act while another witness lied about a study on assault weapons.

Congresswoman Gabby Giffords made a surprise appearance and spoke briefly to the committee as she struggles to recover from severe brain trauma she suffered at the hands of a would-be assassin in 2011. The former Congresswoman read brief remarks that she penned in her own hand (see video at end of this article):

“Thank you for inviting me here today, she said. This is an important conversation for our children, for our communities, for Democrats and Republicans. Speaking is difficult, but I need to say something. Gun violence is a big problem. Too many people are dying. Too many children. We must do something.

It will be hard, but the time is now. You must act. Be bold. Be courageous. Americans are counting on you. Thank you!”

Giffords speaks up for gun control

Her husband, Astronaut Mark Kelly, told the committee that he and Gabby are gun owners who have no intention of giving up their 2nd amendment right, but new controls are needed and they would make the country safer.

Kelly said "But rights demand responsibility, and this right does not extend to terrorists. It does not extend to criminals. It does not extend to the mentally ill. The breadth and complexity of the problem of gun violence is great but it is not an excuse for inaction," Kelly said.

Meanwhile the chief mouthpiece for the National Rifle Association (NRA) told the committee his organization opposed any changes to gun laws including background checks. A recent Gallup poll showed that 92% of Americans favor background checks for all gun sales. A majority of NRA members favor them, as well.

What the studies on assault weapons really mean

Wayne LaPierre of the NRA and David Kopel of the Cato Institute used a study on the 1994 assault rifle ban to convince the committee that the assault weapons ban was “a failure.”

“Independent studies, including a study from the Clinton Justice Department, proved that ban had no impact on lowering crime,” LaPierre said referring to a study done by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, led by criminologist Christopher Koper.

Kopel dwelled on the study in his remarks saying “We do not have to speculate about whether ‘assault weapon’ bans do any good. A Department of Justice study commissioned by the Clinton administration found that they do not,” he explained. “The study found the [Sen. Dianne] Feinstein ban to be a complete failure.”

That was music to the ears of some Republicans on the committee who are bent on preserving their A+ NRA rating. There is one slight problem, however. They misrepresented what the study really said.

Alex Seitz-Wald of Salon.com contacted the author of the study and asked if the statements were accurate. From the horse’s mouth, what LaPierre and Kopel told the Senate was not what the study concluded—it was a misrepresentation, or in other words, a lie.

Christopher Koper said ...”that while it was not a ringing endorsement of the assault weapons ban, as many gun control advocates had hoped, it hardly “proved” the law to be a failure, as LaPierre claims. To the contrary, it found some encouraging signs, like an average 40% drop in the number of assault weapons used in crimes (some cities saw a drop of over 70 %) and some benefit from the ban on high-capacity magazines.”

What Koper⁸⁹ meant was that the positive affects of the ban would occur in the future after the guns that were grandfathered in became old, obsolete, or stopped working. Since that law did not round up guns already on the streets, it would take more than 10 years for the ban to actually reduce the number of assault weapons on the street.

No one confiscated guns, but the NRA uses the fact there was not an immediate cessation in all assault weapon violence as a reason to oppose a new ban. That argument is nothing but a smoke screen to fool Congress into letting gun manufacturers continue to make billions of dollars while kids die in the streets.

Most hearts had to be touched at the courage of the once eloquent Congresswoman struggling to speak because her voice, weak as it is, must be heard.