



Lawmakers target gun laws, neighborhood watch in wake of Florida teen shooting

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[Capitol Hill](#) lawmakers are doing more than donning hoodies on the House floor to respond to the death of Florida teen Trayvon Martin. Members of Congress are crafting new legislation, using the outcry over the shooting to push an agenda calling for everything from gun control to restrictions on neighborhood watch groups.

The legislative steps in the wake of the fatal shooting face an uncertain fate. So far, they come exclusively from Democrats in the Congressional Black Caucus -- not power-wielding Republicans who would no doubt be leery of a hasty legislative response, particularly with an investigation still underway.

But the sponsors are working on the measures over spring break and plan to push them when lawmakers return later this month. They claim they're trying to prevent another killing like the one that has touched off a raging national debate about race and the justice system.

"I am tired of burying young black boys," Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Fla., said on the House floor. Martin lived in Wilson's district.

Wilson, who organized a rally in Miami Sunday calling for an arrest in the case, is taking a well-traveled path in response to a high-profile case -- she's forming a commission.

A spokesman confirmed that Wilson plans to call for the creation of a commission to study racial disparities among black men and boys in America.

Rep. [Sheila Jackson Lee](#), D-Texas, is meanwhile working on a bill that would require neighborhood watch groups -- like the one for which shooter George Zimmerman was a volunteer -- to register.

"No one's registered," Jackson Lee spokesman Michael McQuerry told FoxNews.com.

He said staff members were meeting Monday to try to work out some of the details, such as what entities neighborhood watch groups should register with, and whether that should happen at the federal, state or local level.

Asked whether the proposal would call for neighborhood watch outfits to meet specific standards, McQuerry said it's still "being worked out."

CBC members last week introduced a separate resolution calling on states to repeal so-called "Stand Your Ground" laws. The law, a version of which was enacted in Florida in 2005, allows for individuals to use deadly force -- even outside their home -- if they feel threatened.

The proposed resolution on Capitol Hill, in addition to calling for repeal, "condemns" anybody who played a role in proposing the Stand Your Ground laws. The language in the measure makes blunt assertions about shooter Zimmerman, including a statement that says his "unfounded assumptions and racial bias led to the use of deadly force."

The case, though, is still being investigated at the local level and by federal Justice officials.

Tim Lynch, director of the Cato Institute's Project on Criminal Justice, questioned whether it was prudent to push for any concrete legislative changes without knowing all the facts.

"Holding a hearing would be fine," he noted. But he called the proposals on the Hill "premature."

"My impression is that they're rushing into something," Lynch said.

The media frenzy surrounding the shooting has turned up several conflicting accounts. Zimmerman, who has gone into hiding and has not been charged, reportedly has claimed he shot in self-defense. Others claim Zimmerman followed the unarmed teen and should be charged.

As for the renewed debate over Stand Your Ground legislation, backers of the laws have said the legislation doesn't apply in the case of Zimmerman and Martin.

Former Florida Gov. [Jeb Bush](#) said last month that "stand your ground means stand your ground -- it doesn't mean chase after somebody who's turned their back."

Even Zimmerman's attorney has said the issue at play is self-defense, not Stand Your Ground.

Vice President Biden, in an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation," backed efforts to reconsider the laws.

"But that's a decision for the state to make," he added.