



Durbin “Stand Your Ground” hearing Tuesday: Trayvon Martin’s mother to testify

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WASHINGTON—Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) will chair a hearing Tuesday on the controversial “stand your ground” laws that played a role in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman. Martin’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, will be testifying.

Durbin is holding the hearing in his role as the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. The hearing was originally scheduled for September.

From Durbin: “These laws, one of which played a key role in the trial surrounding the shooting death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin, give individuals permission to use lethal force in public places to protect themselves if they feel their life is in danger, without first attempting to retreat from the situation.

Last August, Durbin triggered a controversy when he sent letters to more than 300 corporate backers of the the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)—a group pushing “Stand Your Ground” laws in various states “asking them to publically state their position on the so-called “stand your ground laws.”

“I write to seek information regarding your company’s position on “stand your ground” legislation that was adopted as a national model by an organization called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC),” Durbin wrote. “In 2005, ALEC approved the adoption of model ‘stand your ground’ legislation entitled the ‘Castle Doctrine Act.’ This model legislation was based on Florida’s ‘stand your ground’ law, and it changes the criminal law regarding self-defense and provides immunity for certain uses of deadly force. “

“Although ALEC does not maintain a public list of corporate members or donors, other public documents indicate that your company funded ALEC at some point during the period between ALEC’s adoption of model “stand your ground” legislation in 2005 and the present day. I acknowledge your company’s right to actively participate in the debate of important political issues, regardless of your position, and I recognize that a company’s involvement with ALEC does not necessarily mean that the company endorses all positions taken by the organization. Therefore I am seeking clarification whether companies that have funded ALEC’s operations in the past currently support ALEC and the model “stand your ground” legislation.”

ALEC-related groups objected to Durbin's request.

“We refuse to answer whether we are or ever have been a supporter of ALEC or its model legislation. We refuse to answer not because we disavow ALEC—far from it. We refuse to answer because as free Americans, that is our right,” replied Darcy Olsen President, Goldwater Institute last August.

THE HEARING

Witnesses: Panel one will include: Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH); Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL); Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX).

Panel two will include: Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin; Lucia McBath, mother of Jordan Davis; David LaBahn, President, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; Ronald Sullivan, Clinical Professor of Law, Director of the Criminal Justice Institute, Harvard Law School; John Lott, President, Crime Prevention Research Center; Ilya Shapiro, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute.

The 10 a.m. ET hearing will be webcast live at www.judiciary.senate.gov.