

## Free Market Nonprofit Rejects Durbin's 'Soviet-Style Tactics'

Illinois Policy Institute to Durbin: 'v zaprose otkazano'

By Lachlan Markay – August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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A free market nonprofit group accused a leading Senate Democrat of “Soviet-style tactics” in an effort that they say is a political intimidation campaign designed to sap support for groups that oppose Democrats’ agenda.

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D., Ill.) requested information from the Illinois Policy Institute regarding their stance on “stand your ground” laws, which expand self-defense rights for firearm owners.

Durbin’s crusade against stand your ground laws, which have become a flashpoint in the wake of the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, is seen by some as a political intimidation campaign directed at groups attempting to expand Second Amendment rights and other conservative priorities.

IPI chief executive John Tillman’s response to Durbin was “v zaprose otkazano,” or “request denied.”

“I have responded in Russian as your letter is reminiscent of Soviet-style tactics of the past,” Tillman explained.

Tillman and others feel that Durbin’s focus on stand your ground laws is actually a way to erode financial support for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative group that crafts model legislation in consultation with state legislators and private companies.

ALEC created model stand your ground legislation in 2005.

In a letter last week to roughly 300 corporate and nonprofit ALEC supporters, Durbin attempted to tie the group to the Martin shooting, even though Florida’s stand your group legislation was passed before ALEC devised its model bill, and the Florida law was irrelevant to the jury’s eventual verdict.

The letter drew fire from other prominent right-of-center organizations, including the Cato Institute and the Goldwater Institute.

“Have you no decency?” the latter asked.

“Those who advocate for the progressive paradigm are waging an unrelenting war on ALEC, on think tanks, on leaders and legislators of the movement,” Tillman said in a speech last week. “Their aim is nothing short of crushing dissent to their views.”

Cato Institute president John Allison wrote in response to Durbin that his letter “is an obvious effort to intimidate” ALEC supporters and “represents a blatant violation of our First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Allison said Durbin’s efforts are “a continuation of the trend of the current administration and congressional leaders, such as yourself, to menace those who do not share your political beliefs—as evidenced by the multiple IRS abuses which have been recently exposed.”

The ongoing scandal involving the Internal Revenue Service, which singled out conservative and tea party nonprofit groups for additional scrutiny, was also mentioned in a response to Durbin from nearly 300 state legislators that have worked with ALEC.

“The contents of your letter are eerily similar to the questions asked by the Internal Revenue Service” in the prolonged vetting processes those groups were forced to undertake to obtain 501(c)(4) nonprofit status.

Such questions, the legislators wrote, “are clearly a violation of the First and Tenth Amendments and the general jurisdiction of a federal office holder.”

Durbin’s office did not respond to a request for comment.