

March 29, 2012

Rep. Dave Frizzell, Chairman of ALEC's Public Sector Board
Mr. W. Preston Baldwin, Chairman of ALEC's Private Sector Board

Dear Rep. Frizzell and Mr. Baldwin:

The tragic shooting of Trayvon Martin has drawn public attention to so-called "Stand Your Ground," or "Shoot First," laws, which the organization you help lead has adopted as a "model" bill to be passed across the nation.

That law in Florida is being used to justify the killing of Trayvon -- an unarmed African American student -- and may prevent the prosecution of his shooter and prevent his family from obtaining justice in the civil courts.

Public records show the Florida law was drafted by the National Rifle Association with two Florida legislators who are ALEC members. In 2005, after it passed, the NRA's lobbyist, Marion Hammer, presented the bill as a model to a closed-door meeting of ALEC's Criminal Justice Task Force. Out of the view of the press and public, ALEC legislators and corporate lobbyists voted to unanimously adopt the bill as a template to be promoted in other states. ALEC's board did not object, and the bill was approved in September 2005.

The public record also shows that the NRA has long been a member and financial benefactor to the group you lead. In recent years, the NRA led ALEC's Public Safety and Elections Task Force as co-chair, when bills like "Voter ID," Arizona's controversial anti-immigrant bill known as SB 1070, and other gun bills were also adopted by legislators and lobbyists as models.

ALEC has prioritized the legislative language that is protecting Trayvon's killer, scoring when such bills passed and touting it in meetings and magazines. ALEC's public bylaws also make it a "duty" for the state legislative leaders of ALEC to enact its model bills into law. Through these efforts and that of the NRA, Florida-like "shoot first" laws have been adopted in at least two dozen states, backed by ALEC legislative members.

As a result, armed vigilantes may get away with killing more unarmed teens like Trayvon and others doing nothing deserving of summary execution. The clear connection between ALEC, the NRA, and the recent wave of "shoot first" laws passed around the country do not come as a surprise.

For years, ALEC has engaged in a stealthy campaign to dismantle workers rights, starve government-funded programs, privatize public institutions and help your corporate funders pollute our neighborhoods. But now, in the wake of Trayvon's shooting, you must also assume some share of responsibility for the tragic, and predicted, outcome of these laws.


The "shoot first" laws ALEC claims are a "model" are often used to shield armed men who pursue their victims. George Zimmerman was told to stay in his car by authorities, an admonition he ignored. Another Florida man chased a thief down an alley and stabbed him to death. In Wisconsin, after calling the police to break up a party, a neighbor shot a young African American man hiding on his porch. A Florida father was shot in front of his daughter standing up for kids skateboarding in a public park. None of these shooters have been convicted of these deaths. And that is why over the past six years law enforcement officers and prosecutors have frequently opposed this legislation when it is promoted in their states.


ALEC's corporate funders, including Koch Industries and some of the biggest oil and drug companies in the world, help make ALEC's agenda possible, but we know you work to hide from the public information about how much money special interests are spending and what they get in return for their investment. We know they get unparalleled access to legislators at resorts where corporations vote as equals alongside elected officials and socialize at exclusive gatherings. We know the NRA's shooting events on the trips are an ALEC lobbyist and politician tradition.


As the largest group for state legislators in the country, we believe ALEC should set the highest standard of transparency and openness to the press and public when our elected officials gather for meetings, not the lowest.


We call on you as the co-leaders of ALEC's board to fully disclose ALEC's financial relationship with all NRA entities, including any contributions, sponsorships, in-kind support or other support ALEC has received, and we ask your joint board to pledge to desist from supporting and promoting lethal "Shoot First" legislation.


Sincerely,



MARC H. MORIAL - NATIONAL Urban League

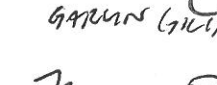
 - Arturo Carmona - Presente.org


 - Center of Change.org

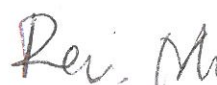
 Center for Media and Democracy

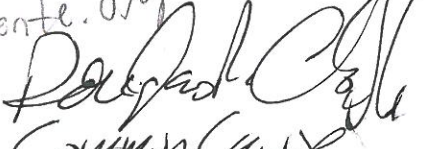
 Danielle Sleight, Progress Now


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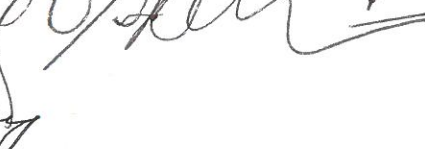
 Marge Baker, People for the American Way

 Rev. Michael E. ... National Council of Churches

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 Faith in Public Life

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