

October 29, 2013

The Honorable U.S. Senator Dick Durbin
Assistant Majority Leader
Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee
on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

We write to commend you for holding this hearing today on the effects of “model” legislation that has been used to exonerate the use of deadly force in senseless tragedies where shooting victims were pursued and were unarmed.

It is an indisputable fact that for more than six years the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) pushed “Stand Your Ground” legislation to state lawmakers across the country. Thanks to ALEC’s corporate-funded lobbying efforts, more than two dozen states have such laws in effect.

Citizens exercising their freedom of speech expressed outrage over these laws and the role of the corporate-funded ALEC in pushing them, which led ALEC to stop advocating for the deadly and flawed legislation. However, to date, ALEC has not called on states to repeal the damage done. ALEC has also claimed that Stand Your Ground played no role in the verdict in the trial of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin, even though the jury was instructed that Zimmerman had a “right to stand his ground and had no duty to retreat,” under that bill.

For years -- with corporate lobbyists secretly voting with legislators on “model” bills like this one -- ALEC has engaged in a stealthy campaign to dismantle workers rights, privatize public institutions, thwart efforts to address climate change, and prevent juries from holding corporations accountable.

It has done so while claiming to the IRS that it engages in zero lobbying. It has also spent millions on trips for lawmakers while claiming to the IRS that it spends almost nothing on travel for public officials. That is why it is the subject of three pending complaints to the IRS alleging tax fraud.

Accordingly, we reject the claims of ALEC and its boosters that it is inappropriate for the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold this hearing or inquire whether the corporate funders of ALEC support the misguided and deeply flawed Stand Your Ground laws. The Senate also has ample grounds inquire into a group that has been accused of tax fraud for secret lobbying and gifts.

We thank this Committee for shining a light on these important matters.

Sincerely,

