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# Standing Ground Against the N.R.A.

By [THE EDITORIAL BOARD](#) APRIL 11, 2017



A sign outside a gun store in West Columbia, S.C. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Two years after nine churchgoers were shot to death in a horrific gun spree in [Charleston, S.C.](#), tone-deaf state lawmakers are considering a measure to allow South Carolina residents to carry guns — openly or concealed — without the need to obtain a state weapons permit.

Representative Bill Crosby supports gun rights but felt obliged to warn the House as it approved the measure last week that “all it does is it makes these good ol’ boys who like to have guns strapped to their hips not conceal them.”

The Republican-controlled House passed the dangerous laissez-faire gun bill only after limiting debate. They thereby demeaned lawmakers' First Amendment rights in the rush to further enshrine the Second Amendment.

The carnage at the [Emanuel A.M.E. Church](#) against African-American worshipers was carried out by a racist gunman who was able to buy his weapon because of shoddy enforcement of gun control laws. Yet, rather than focus on tighter gun safety, lawmakers yielded once more to the National Rifle Association's agenda to freely arm the public and enrich the gun industry. The toll the proliferation of guns takes on the nation was made clear yet again on Monday when gunfire broke out at an elementary school in San Bernardino, Calif., leaving two adults and one child dead and one student critically injured.

The gun lobby is pushing hard in South Carolina for passage of the no-permit measure in the Senate, and for an assortment of other retrogressive measures in other statehouses. In Florida, the legislature is nearing final approval of a bill making the state's notorious [Stand Your Ground law](#) even more dangerous by giving people accused of killings greater leeway to claim self-defense and immunity.

The measure would shift the burden of proof from defendants to prosecutors, who would have to show "beyond a reasonable doubt" at a pretrial hearing that a defendant's claim of self-defense was not valid. That "will do nothing more than increase the carnage that has been inflicted on our communities," warned one legislator, Bobby DuBose, citing research that the original Stand Your Ground law had increased homicides and diminished victims' rights.

Fortunately, some statehouses whose members defend gun ownership seem interested in improving public safety. In Vermont, the House passed a bill last month to allow the police to confiscate temporarily the firearms of people accused of domestic abuse. This is a grave problem nationally. The bill would let officers take guns away for up to five days after heated domestic incidents, even if a firearm was not involved. "This

to me isn't about guns, per se," said Representative Chip Conquest, a gun-rights advocate. "It's about protecting people at a time when we know they're particularly vulnerable from a weapon that we know is often used."