



**WOMEN  
AGAINST  
GUN  
VIOLENCE**

# The Activist

## Gun Control After Heller

**T**he Court has spoken. The NRA and other pro-gun groups threw all their might into a case meant to end gun control. But, instead, sensible gun laws were upheld and WAGV is stronger than ever.

On June 29, the United States Supreme Court handed down the first opinion on the Second Amendment in nearly 70 years. The case of *Heller v. The District of Columbia* focused on the law banning handguns, mandating that all guns be kept locked or disassembled.

The ruling overturned the District's gun ban as an unconstitutional violation of the Second Amendment. For the first time ever, the Supreme Court ruled that "the right to keep and bear arms" was an individual right, as opposed to the collective right of a "well regulated militia" that had held legal sway for decades.

Although a definite setback to the gun violence prevention movement, this is

by no means the end of the movement. The immediate effect is the flurry of lawsuits challenging gun laws that started moments after the ruling was published. Some, if not most, of the lawsuits are simply the NRA using its money and influence to pressure local governments to change their laws. There are, however, legitimate legal questions that need to be answered as the ruling was by no means black and white. It states:

*"The Court's opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms."*

These simple sentences both validate and protect the laws that Women Against Gun Violence has strived to pass. WAGV's legislative goals to keep guns out of the hands of kids and criminals, and to give law enforcement

the tools it needs to prevent gun violence, have been strengthened by this case.

For years, the groups opposed to gun regulations have argued about a slippery slope to instill fear in law-abiding gun owners. The idea that if you allow regulations on bazookas, it will only be a matter of time before the government comes to take all your guns. By upholding regulations and recognizing the individual right to bear arms, the Court has crushed that argument once and for all. Now, a law regulating assault weapons or .50 caliber sniper rifles is just that, and not the beginning of some master plan.

Looking to the future, this is an opportunity to take the scare tactics out of the debate, and work together to make our homes, communities and country truly safer. Women Against Gun Violence will use this opportunity to continue advocating for sensible, evidence-based gun regulations.



*Pictured from the left: Los Angeles County Sheriff, Lee Baca being interviewed at the brunch by Fox News. Honoree Fran Inman is joined by the Majestic Reality youth leaders and Majestic Foundation staff member Meghan Loper.*

For more photos and the story about WAGV's 13th Annual Courageous Leadership Awards Brunch see page 6.

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## Councilmember Wendy Greuel

**W**ho was the youngest person ever to attend a WAGV brunch?

It was Thomas Schramm, held in the arms of his mother, Councilmember Wendy Greuel.

A longtime friend and generous contributor to WAGV, Wendy began her political career as an intern in the office of former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, with a focus on affordable housing and the needs of the homeless. This led to

her job with the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development in the Clinton Administration.

First elected in 2002, Wendy is now serving her second term as Second District representative on the L.A. City Council. She also serves as President Pro Tem of the Council. Word has it that she will run for a citywide office next year. Although her committees do not include Public Safety, her interest in gun regulations has made her a loyal supporter of WAGV, and she is currently sponsoring a bill that would ban the installation of

secret compartments in vehicles to hide firearms.

Wendy is also the co-author, with Council members Janice Hahn and Jan Perry, of Proposition A, which would provide funding for gang-violence prevention programs.

WAGV is grateful for the continued leadership and support of friends like Wendy.



## Reverend Dr. George Regas

**G**eorge Regas joined the WAGV Advisory Board when WAGV partnered with his organization, the Pasadena Coalition for a Non-Violent City, after the Halloween shooting of two youths in Pasadena in 1993. At that time, Dr. Regas became an even more passionate advocate for gun regulations.

For 28 years, he was rector of the All-Saints Church in Pasadena, and is known as a dominant voice for peace and justice in the United States. In 2004, he preached an anti-war sermon during the presidential election, and subsequently the IRS denied non-profit status to his church because of

what they deemed his partisan words. The church ultimately won back its nonprofit status.

Dr. Regas' culturally diverse congregation worked, often in conjunction with Westside Rabbi Leonard Beerman and the Leo Baeck congregation, in opposition to the Vietnam War, the escalating arms race and the current war in Iraq.

One of the truly good and courageous guys!



## No on Proposition 6

Following a year with record low homicides in Los Angeles, and reductions of violent crime in many areas, Proposition 6 is using misinformation and fear to push through a radical agenda. The proposition can be broken down into two parts.

The first part is harsher sentences for gang-related offenses. While this may seem like a good idea, Proposition 6 goes so far as to become draconian. One of the provisions presumes that minors, 14 to 17, who are involved in gang-related cases are “unfit” for juvenile court and should be tried as adults. This is just one of the many changes to the justice system that favors incarceration as opposed to prevention and intervention.

The second part of the proposition is funding. The proposition designates \$1 billion in

the first year to fund suppression, prison construction and probation. In a year when the state is facing a \$15 billion shortfall, we need to look to cost-effective solutions. Incarcerating a youth costs more each year than the cost of an Ivy League school, but intervention and prevention have proven to be effective in reducing crime, and cost a mere fraction of incarceration.

Women Against Gun Violence applies the public health model to stop violence. This method calls for finding and addressing the root causes of violence to affect systemic change, as opposed to reacting to individual instances of violence. Proposition 6 ignores the public health model - in effect locking up and throwing away the key on a whole generation of youth. We urge you to vote no on 6.

## Yes On A

Proposition A on the Los Angeles city ballot, will combat gang violence using the public health model, including intervention and prevention. The proposition consists of a \$36 dollar per year parcel tax to fund programs that have been proven to work.

When programs are established it is very difficult to separate what is effective from what is just a “feel good” program. Evaluating the programs that will be funded is built into Proposition A and ensures that the money will be spent where it will be most effective.

The mandated evaluation brings easy accountability through numbers. Almost

any program can show one or two instances where it has made a difference, but evaluation goes beyond the incidental to see the overall effect of a program.

The cost effective, proven programs that will be funded by Proposition A include job training, safe passage for youth to and from school, and community-based after-school activities that keep kids safe and out of gangs. This will have a positive affect for the youth that participate and the community as a whole. WAGV is proud to support Proposition A.

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## Using Education as a Tool

**N**elson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Women Against Gun Violence continues to use community outreach and education as one of our tools to prevent gun violence. This year alone, we have been able to reach more individuals than previous years. Through our presentations, we share with parents the dangers of bringing a gun into the home and how to store a gun safely. We also encourage them to talk to their kids about gun violence.

This year, we have been able to distribute gun locks to parents. The locks were generously donated to us by the L.A. Police Department. Our approach continues to gain momentum, and opens doors to new sites and new audiences.

As the new school year begins and students prepare to learn, WAGV

plans to introduce our newest project "Dodgin' the Bullet" to youth. This project is a creative and interactive way to discuss the issue of gun violence as it relates to gangs, retaliation, suicide, bullying, and youth relationship violence. Some of the areas in which we intend to focus our efforts are located in Mayor Villaraigosa's gang-reduction zones.

Our partnerships with Youth Alive! and Homeboy Industries continue to grow stronger. Having young men from both organizations share their personal encounters with gun violence is an essential part of reaching out to youth. Young audiences are attracted to their stories like a magnet because they are able to relate to the speakers' individual stories. Because they don't feel lectured to, they are more open to hearing the message.



In 2008 WAGV has reached

# 10,356

Parents, Youth and Community Members

*Pictured from top:*

*Gustavo Mojica from Homeboy Industries talking to youth at Magnolia Science Academy. WAGV speaker Juan Carlos Zamudio from Homeboy Industries sharing his story at Costline Church parenting class. Steve Aguilar and Gustavo Mojica from Homeboy Industries after a parenting presentation at Drew Middle School. Eddie Flores from Youth Alive! working the "Dodgin' the Bullet" information booth for WAGV's annual brunch 2008.*

## California Legislative Report

This was a difficult year for legislation in Sacramento because of the unprecedented budget fight and the enormous deficit. As a result, many good bills did not make it to the Governor's desk. In spite of this, two crucial gun-violence prevention bills are just a signature away from becoming law.

SB 1171, by Senator Jack Scott, fixes a loophole in the law regarding loaded firearms. Strict definitions of when a gun is loaded act as safeguards to keep accidents from happening. A recent court ruling made the fish and game code's loose definition of loaded apply in all incorporated areas of California. This would allow someone to drive with a "loaded" gun on the passenger seat of his or her car on many of the roads and highways in the state. This would pose a great danger to law enforcement, and encourage road rage incidents. Senator Scott has been a leader in the violence-prevention movement, and it is only fitting that in his last year as a legislator, he continues to lead.

The other key bill is AB 2696 by Assemblymember Paul Krekorian. This bill updates the antiquated mail-in, paper reporting used to send mental health hold notices to the California Department of Justice. The current system has cracks that allow a person prohibited from owning a gun to leave the hospital and buy a gun on the way home. The electronic reporting mandated by AB 2696 will seal those cracks, and ensure that people who are mentally unstable will not be able to purchase firearms.

These bills represent significant progress toward ending gun violence. WAGV would like to thank the authors of these bills, Senator Jack Scott and Assemblymember Paul Krekorian for their efforts to stop gun violence.



## Make Your Voice Heard - VOTE

On November 4th you have the opportunity to make a significant impact on your community. While the Presidential election is dominating the media, there are also propositions and local elections, the outcomes of which will shape your future.

Taking the time to vote is key, and being informed will ensure that the issues that you care about are represented in your choices. The best place to start is your voter sample ballot. The sample ballot has arguments for and against the propositions on the ballot and information on the candidates.

After getting the basics, look deeper into

the issues by turning to organizations that you support. Women Against Gun Violence is supporting Proposition A in Los Angeles, and opposing Proposition 6. For more information see news on page 3.

Many times you can also get significant insight from the groups with which you disagree. If you want to check on the environmental stance of a candidate, check to see if they are supported by oil companies. To check positions on gun violence, see who the NRA supports.

After educating yourself, you can become an advocate. Talking with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers is an opportunity to expand the

power of your voice. Have you asked if the people you know have registered to vote? Do they know where their polling place is? Do they know the issues?

These simple questions can make a huge difference in your community. We all deserve a government that represents our interests and takes care of our needs; the only way to get it is by participating.

Register to vote by

**October**  
**20<sup>th</sup>**

# Thank You

## 2008 Courageous Leadership Award Supporters



**M**ore than 300 people jammed the Skirball Center on a lovely June day to honor the three leaders who had been selected for their courageous leadership in reducing and preventing gun violence, and to listen to the experiences of women who had lost loved ones, but turned their grief into action.

Our honorees were: LAPD Chief William Bratton, for his courageous stand against the proliferation of guns and gun violence; Billie Weiss, for her work in violence prevention as the founder of the Violence Prevention Coalition; and Fran Inman, president of the Majestic Reality Foundation for her work with youth leaders.

The keynote speakers were four women who are the survivors of gun violence, and have become activists for change. Marlys Nunneri was a victim of gun violence in her abusive marital relationship. She joined WAGV as a speaker, which helped her to heal, and she has been helping others ever since. Rhonda Foster's son Evan Leigh was shot and killed as he was sitting in the family car. His brother, who was also in the car, suffered a serious eye injury. Rhonda has become a committed advocate for gun regulations, and has

joined the WAGV board.

Glenda Meraz' estranged husband shot and killed her 2-year-old daughter, and then killed himself. His brother blamed Glenda for this tragedy, and shot her seven times before taking his own life. She survived to become a passionate speaker for WAGV, and joined the board.

Sheri Barnett's son, Tony Scott, was gunned down in the street at age 25. After receiving a heart-breaking call from the coroner's office, a letter from WAGV expressing condolences brought solace and activism to Sheri. She is a passionate speaker for WAGV, and is now the President of our Board of Directors.

A big thanks to our brunch chairs, Roberta Schiller and Sheri Barnett, for making this great event such a success. It is the dedication of the Board of Directors and supporters that make WAGV's work to stop gun violence possible. The monies raised will help to fund WAGV's community and legislative work. Please join us at next year's event as WAGV celebrates its 15th anniversary.



*Pictured clockwise from left: Civil rights leader Connie Rice and WAGV Chair Ann Reiss Lane join Honoree Billie Weiss. WAGV board member Nadine LeBlanc joins Honoree Chief William Bratton and his wife, and our emcee, Rikki Klieman. Brunch Co-Chairs, board president Sheri Barnett and board member Roberta Schiller. Honorary Brunch Chair and Assemblymember Mike Feuer giving opening remarks.*

## A Letter from Sheri Barnett, Board President

**W**AGV's 13th Annual Courageous Leadership Awards brunch took place four months ago, but for me it was like yesterday. Standing at the podium of the Skirball and seeing all of our friends and supporters is a memory that remains with me each day. What a wonderful success it was! I want to thank our honorees, emcee, WAGV advisory board and governing board - and all of the volunteers — for their assistance in making this event one of our most successful ever. And I'd like to thank each of you who attended and supported the brunch for all you do for Women Against Gun Violence.

With your help, WAGV speakers are able to reach out to youngsters throughout the L.A. Unified School District to let kids know about the danger of guns. Each \$50 donation

pays for a speaker. For \$100, we are able to train speakers and prepare them as spokespersons for our mission to educate residents about the danger of firearms. A new edition of our brochure, How to Talk With Kids About Guns, is now available in English and Spanish. We like to send these brochures out with speakers. If you have a church, synagogue, school or community group that might be an appropriate venue for our outreach, please let us know and we will provide an excellent speaker for your group.

We rely on your donations, and are truly grateful for your continued support. When you receive our annual appeal letter in early November, I know I can count on you.

And, while we are thinking of November, please remember to



vote. An informed electorate is crucial to our country, and I am sure as a reader of The Activist, you are interested and informed. We also have some very important local and state elections on the ballot. I hope you will gather the necessary information and vote for candidates and propositions that reflect our anti-gun violence positions.

It is an honor to be your WAGV president.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheri Barnett".

## We would like to thank the donors of our 2008 Silent Auction

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Matt Wuerker  
Yummy Yoga  
Judy Zeidler  
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Zoological Society of San Diego



# Vote No On 6

\$1 Billion Dollars  
To Lock Up Kids

Is NOT The Answer.



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