

Opinion: Time for people to stand their ground against NRA

By E.J. Dionne Jr., Washington Post

It's understandable if unfortunate that the controversy surrounding the killing of Trayvon Martin has polarized the country along both racial and ideological lines. But there is one issue that should not have any racial connotations: the urgency of repealing "Stand Your Ground" laws.

And leave it to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to speak the blunt truth about why these laws are dangerous – and why the National Rifle Association keeps pushing them anyway.

"In reality," Bloomberg said in a speech before the National Press Club last week, "the NRA's leaders weren't interested in public safety. They were interested in promoting a culture where people take the law into their own hands and face no consequences for it. Let's call that by its real name: vigilantism."

On guns, Bloomberg is strong and everyone else is feckless, to paraphrase the late columnist Murray Kempton writing about an earlier mayor.

OK, not exactly everyone else. Bloomberg's partners in the group Mayors Against Illegal Guns – notably Boston's Mayor Tom Menino, the organization's co-chair – have filled the void left in state legislatures, Congress and the White House by moderates, liberals and many conservatives who ought to know better but are too petrified by the NRA to confront it. Mayors face the daily toll taken by gun laws dictated by gun lobbyists and are less easily intimidated.

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