



NEWS RELEASE

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AG Wilson Applauds Passage of “Ashley Hall Bill”

COLUMBIA, SC - *Mental Health Registry Bill Protects Our Children and 2nd Amendment Rights*

South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson released the following statement on ratification of the “Ashley Hall Bill” (H. 3560) after the House unanimously concurred Senate amendments today.

On February 4, 2013, Alice Boland arrived at Ashley Hall School in Charleston with a loaded handgun and repeatedly pulled the trigger at administrators, teachers, and students gathered outside for the afternoon car pool. Thankfully, the gun never chambered. However, Ms. Boland’s ability to purchase a firearm, despite her history of threats to assassinate President George W. Bush and her numerous court-ordered mental health commitments provided the impetus for a legislative remedy.

“Eighty seven days after a near tragedy at Ashley Hall School in Charleston, the General Assembly passed one of the year’s most important pieces of legislation. The ‘Ashley Hall Bill’ keeps South Carolinians safe by preventing those who have been court adjudicated mentally ill from purchasing firearms, while also protecting the constitutional rights of lawful gun owners.

“February 4th’s disturbing incident outside Ashley Hall School came dangerously close to becoming another Virginia Tech massacre. The incident was a wake-up call for our state and demonstrated the need for mental health reporting in South Carolina.

“This bill in no way infringes on the rights of law-abiding South Carolinians like myself who legally own guns. It simply ensures that people who are not lawfully allowed to carry a gun cannot get one. It also enables those who have recovered from their mental illness and are no longer a danger to themselves or their community to fully regain their Second Amendment rights.

“An important civics lesson can be learned from this bill and how Ashley Hall parents such as Anna Murray and many others who set an example for citizens can effectively come together to make our state a safer place to live, work, and raise a family.

“I look forward to Governor Haley signing this bill into law, and I commend legislative leaders such as Rick Quinn, Eddie Tallon, Leon Stavrinakis, Greg Gregory, Larry Martin, Paul Thurmond, and the entire General Assembly for quickly responding to this matter and working with the Attorney General’s office, the Lieutenant Governor, the

House Speaker, SLED, NRA, Probate Courts, Sheriffs, Solicitors, Police Chiefs, Court Administration, and Ashley Hall parents to accomplish this legislation.”

Legislators echoed Attorney General Wilson’s remarks.

Lieutenant Governor Glenn McConnell stated, "This is a positive example of how grassroots can bring change. It has been a wonderful experience for all of us in public office."

Senator Greg Gregory stated, “The passage of this bill is one of the significant accomplishments of the General Assembly this year. It provides a common sense partial solution to gun violence while in no way diminishing the 2nd Amendment rights of South Carolinians.” Gregory continued, “Passage of the bill is due to one of the finest collective efforts among citizens, legislators and state agencies that I’ve witnessed.”

Senator Larry Martin stated, *“I want to applaud the Ashley Hall “Moms” for their untiring efforts to turn a tragic occurrence into a positive result for the people of our state. Their example should be a testament to others of what our citizens can and should do when they take their time and abilities to work to make our state a better one for ourselves and our children. I can’t say enough about the efforts and cooperation of the Ashley Hall “Moms”, the Attorney General and his staff, SLED, and Senator Gregory and his subcommittee for the work to get this important legislation passed.”*

Representative Leon Stavrinakis stated, *“What happened at Ashley Hall sent shockwaves through everyone in the legislature and we acted as quickly as we could to fix this glaring loophole in the system. As I have said before, while we did not have the ultimate tragedy at Ashley Hall, it wasn't because the system was working. The system was broken. With the passage of this bill, no one with a criminal history of mental illness will be able to legally purchase a firearm in South Carolina.”*

Representative Eddie Tallon stated, “This bill would not have been possible without a team effort. Today is a great day in South Carolina because of folks like Anna Murray, the Attorney General, Lt. Governor, Speaker, SLED, and the House and Senate working together to simultaneously protect our communities and the Constitution.”

Representative Rick Quinn stated, “The Ashley Hall legislation is the byproduct of bipartisanship and the Attorney General, SLED, and law enforcement working with the NRA to protect our state while not infringing on the gun rights of law abiding citizens. It is a miracle the gun did not chamber at Ashley Hall. However, this bill shows that good can come from near tragedies.”

H. 3560 enables South Carolina to report the names of those who have been court adjudicated mentally ill to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS.) The legislation was supported by a bipartisan coalition of law enforcement officials and legislators, as well as the National Rifle Association.