



**October 29, 2013**

**Common Cause Statement**

**Hearing at the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights  
“Stand Your Ground” Laws: Civil Rights and Public Safety Implications of the Expanded Use of Deadly Force”**

Common Cause commends Senator Durbin and the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights for holding a hearing today to examine the many implications of American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)-backed “Stand Your Ground” laws. In addition to documenting the laws’ impact on civil rights and public safety, it is important for the public to fully understand the process by which such legislation was introduced, debated, and ultimately enacted in various jurisdictions around the country. While ALEC recently disbanded the task force that promoted “Stand Your Ground” bills, more sunlight needs to be shed on how it is that the nation’s largest gun lobby can team up with a tax-exempt group to pass such controversial legislation in more than two dozen states without any meaningful oversight or legal consequences.

ALEC has repeatedly engaged in secretive efforts to push corporate-backed bills in State Houses across the nation while claiming in its IRS filings that it does not spend a dime on lobbying. It is illegal and unethical for an organization to claim 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status – and obtain tax deductions for its corporate funders – when its primary purpose is to pass legislation.

In April 2012, Common Cause [filed a whistleblower complaint](#) with the IRS against ALEC, charging that the group misuses charity laws, massively underreports its lobbying, and obtains improper tax breaks for corporate funders at the taxpayers’ expense. Over [4,000 pages](#) of ALEC documents were submitted as evidence. In July 2013, Common Cause teamed up with the Center for Media and Democracy to also expose ALEC’s scheme for raising and spending millions of dollars on legislator travel, hotels and meals, and [filed a supplemental whistleblower complaint with the IRS](#) documenting how ALEC has misrepresented and misreported those expenditures on its tax forms.

Common Cause appreciates the work of Senator Durbin and this Subcommittee for holding this hearing. The Senate has ample grounds to investigate the dramatic impact that “Stand Your Ground” laws have on American families and communities, as well as the misuse of federal tax laws to shield the efforts of powerful special interests over our democracy and policy outcomes from public scrutiny.