Leaders, law enforcement meet on gun safety

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FORT LAUDERDALE — In the wake of murders of adults and children in places as far afield as Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Taft High School in Los Angeles, and as close to home as South Florida, at the hands of those armed with rifles, assault weapons and other guns, gun safety was the focus of a Jan. 11 roundtable discussion led by Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz with Broward Mayor Kristin Jacobs, Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Broward Sheriff Scott Israel and city officials and law enforcement representatives from the two counties.

Folow The Gun

“Registration is one of the most important things we can do. We register our cars, we register to vote, yet it’s not mandatory to register a weapon,” said Jacobs. “I think we have to ‘follow the gun’ and make gun owners be personally liable and responsible when owning a weapon.”

“We need to talk about what’s possible now. Public feedback and outrage hits home with legislators. This is a national discussion and an opportune time to make changes,” said Schultz.

The roundtable discussion was one of several that officials said will take place throughout the state to garner ideas that the federal government will hopefully adopt to prevent the crimes seen so often recently on school campuses, in a movie theater and in mall parking lots.

“There are currently stiff federal penalties that aren’t being enforced,” said Gimenez. “Private sales of handguns should not be allowed, banning high capacity ammunition magazines is a no-brainer and we have to engage the community. In Miami-Dade we have a bounty, a one thousand dollar reward for people who report crim‘es.”

Armed at Schools

Other ideas discussed included placing armed law enforcement officers at all schools, mandatory universal background screenings, a mandatory license that would ensure gun owners are properly trained, training teachers to recognize mental health issues and regulating the sales of ammunition such as bullets designed to penetrate body armor.

“We have to change the current rules. There are rules in place that block common sense. It’s a multi-layered approach. Placing cameras in school hallways, encourage public involvement on a large scale to attract the attention of lawmakers, stop glorifying the shooter instead of focusing on the victims,” said Jacobs. “We have to take steps now to create a certain level of comfort.”

The meeting took place at the Broward Sheriff Headquarters in Fort Lauderdale. The next meeting is planned for Miami. Congresswoman Wasserman Shultz asked those in attendance to put their suggestions in writing and send them to her, with the promise that she would deliver the ideas to Congress.

*Pictured above are Broward County Mayor Kristen Jacobs, left, and Broward Sheriff Scott Israel, right.