



State Reps Demand More Action from Daley on Violence: 'What we've been doing isn't working'

Wed, Jun 23, 2010

by [Mick Dumke](#)

Two months ago state reps John Fritchey and LaShawn Ford called on Mayor Richard M. Daley and Governor Pat Quinn to [consider using the national guard](#) to battle violence in Chicago. The mayor [dismissed the idea](#) as a quick fix and tried to redirect the conversation, saying the legislators should be focused on helping him get tougher gun laws passed in Springfield—even though Chicago already has the toughest gun restrictions in the country.

“This is all about guns,” Daley said at the time.

But on Wednesday afternoon the legislators were back before the cameras, and this time they went even further than they had in April, calling for another discussion of the national guard proposal, insisting that Daley isn't doing enough about recurring violence, and asking city and state officials to consider decriminalizing marijuana.

“At some point there is going to have to be some recognition that what we've been doing isn't working,” Fritchey said.

This time around the mayor simply refused to say anything.

Fritchey and Ford had called the presser to argue that gun violence is costing the city money—as much as \$2.5 billion annually, according to [one study](#)—through health care expenses, the price of policing and incarceration, and especially lost business. That works out to \$2,500 a person.

“If people can't understand for moral reasons that this is a citywide issue, maybe they'll understand it for economic reasons,” Fritchey said.

But both legislators used the opportunity to criticize the Daley administration's [unrelenting emphasis](#) on gun control and demand that more be done.

Police say the city averages more than four shootings a day. The mayor and police chief Jody Weis[insist](#) that this demonstrates the need for tough gun-control laws, but they [can't or won't explain](#) how current restrictions have been effective.

Ford and Fritchey say that's not acceptable.

"We can't continue to focus on guns," Ford said. "It's not guns causing all the crime and violence in our communities. We can't just focus on more gun legislation in Springfield. We have to work on keeping these communities clean and fighting crime. People are [stabbing](#) people, people are [beating](#) people with baseball bats. This is about more than guns."

"We've had a gun ban since 1982 and since then thousands of lives have been lost [to gun violence]," said Fritchey. "I'm not going to say it's not effective but it's clearly not the only answer."

They said they still think city and state officials should consider using national guardsmen to support Chicago cops. The police department is [hundreds of officers short](#) of the staffing level approved by the City Council last fall.

"When we called for the national guard to come out and assist with the problem, I got lots of flack and lots of support," Ford said. "But I will not stop asking for help."

"If they want to discount the national guard proposal, so be it," Fritchey added. "But they better come back with another answer.... This is a problem that's getting worse, not better."

Both legislators insist they have no political motives aside from wanting to pressure Daley and Quinn to respond more quickly to the violence, though Ford has expressed impatience with City Hall for not doing more economic development in his west side district and Fritchey is on a bit of a progressive-politics tear, having [lashed out](#) at Daley's [TIF policies](#) just last week.

They certainly can't be accused of playing it safe. The mayor tends to get irritated by critics and skeptics, and on Wednesday the legislators essentially accused him of overseeing a two-tiered system of city services and policing.

"For two long we've really had two cities here in Chicago," Fritchey said. "You have eight muggings at [North Avenue beach](#) and the next day you have security cameras out there. I want

to see the same reaction and results and commitment to change when someone's shot in [North Lawndale](#) as when two women are [beaten in Bucktown](#)."

"If we're serious, we must have a real aggressive effort to reduce crime in these hard-hit areas," Ford said. "These areas are infested with crime and we need more police."

Fritchey said the violence is so costly in lives and dollars that city and state officials should re-examine every aspect of the problem, including decriminalizing marijuana. "I don't want to get too off track here, but it needs to be on the table to be discussed," he said.

Ford was a little more coy on that issue. "I think you should always consider things," he said.

A reporter asked the men if they knew Chicago's 2010 homicide count. Fritchey pointed to a poster behind the podium that said "207 murders in 2010 ... so far."

"It's actually 209 now," he said. "This was printed a day and a half ago and it's already out of date."

The mayor's response? So far there isn't one. When I asked him about the renewed calls for action at a press conference Wednesday morning, he grunted something that sounded like "No" and then left the room, event over.