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To honor Orlando victims, let's once again work to make the impossible possible

By Rev. Nancy Nord Bence | 09:16 am



REUTERS/Steve Nesius

The fight to prevent gun violence is and will continue to be a hard conflict — one of the hardest ever fought in our state and country.

Sunday was a terrible day. In Orlando. And everywhere else in this nation, including Minnesota. The worst mass shooting in American history. 50 people dead (so far). Over 50 injured (some critically). Hundreds of people terrified and traumatized. Scores of law enforcement officers put in harm's way. A single individual took it upon himself to fire his hate from a military-style AR-15 into the bodies of young people who were dancing and laughing and having fun — because he believed them to be gay. And because he could legally purchase an AR-15.

Protect Minnesota had a booth at the Golden Valley Pride Festival on Sunday. There were large crowds, happy children, adorable overly friendly dogs. And there was deep sadness about the shootings in Orlando. Everyone realized that it could have happened here, to our loved ones. The festival organizers agreed to allow Protect Minnesota to host a rally against gun violence. It was a good event:

Sen. Ron Latz, Sen. Ann Rest, Rep. Peggy Flanagan and Rep. Mike Freiberg all spoke about the need for better gun legislation like comprehensive background checks. The crowd clapped and cheered.

Can we make a difference?

Afterwards I did several press interviews. One reporter asked, “After so many mass shootings, with both sides of this issue so polarized and entrenched, why do you think anything Protect Minnesota does will make a difference?”



It was a good question. Protect Minnesota has been fighting the gun lobby for 25 years and the fight just gets harder every year. In the first 160 days so far this year, there have been 133 mass shootings. Why do I think we can make a difference?



Rev. Nancy Nord Bence

I answered, “Look around you. We’re at a gay pride festival, four years after Minnesota became the first state to defeat a same-sex marriage ban, three years after Minnesota legalized same-sex marriage, and less than a year after the Supreme Court ruled that marriage is

a constitutional right for all, including gays and lesbians. A decade ago any of these achievements seemed absolutely impossible. I believe we will defeat the gun lobby and pass common-sense gun reform the same way we achieved gay marriage: by engaging tens of thousands of people throughout the state in the effort. By sharing our stories and raising our voices, forming partnerships, mobilizing supporters, and doing the hard work.”

We must keep at it

Thomas Paine said “The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.” The fight to prevent gun violence is and will continue to be a hard conflict — one of the hardest ever fought in our state and country. But the lives of the 50 who were shot to death in Orlando Saturday night, and the 32,000 others who will be killed by guns in America this year, call on us to keep at it. To work toward the glorious triumph. To dedicate ourselves — our lives, our time, our resources — to making the impossible possible. Again.

Let's do it. Let's honor the victims in Orlando. Let's Protect Minnesota.

The Rev. Nancy Nord Bence is the executive director of Protect Minnesota.

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