

Evangelicals Butt Heads With the NRA in Wake of California Shooting

In the wake of the mass shooting in California, Rob Schenck and Patrick J. Mahoney of the National Clergy Council in Washington, D.C., are traveling to the shooting site to call fellow evangelicals ministers to engage in solutions to gun violence perpetrated by the mentally ill.

Schenck said, "Evangelical church leaders have been largely silent on this crisis and that can't continue. These tragedies are a matter of life and death, and they leave individuals, families and whole communities devastated and in terrible fear. Christian leaders can't simply shrug their shoulders and walk away from such enormous tragedy. Clergy have a unique perspective and unique contributions to make toward solving this problem."

Mahoney said, "It's time for the Christian community, especially pastors, to stand up, speak out and take action. We have spent so much time conducting funerals and comforting the grieving, now we must spend equal time working to avoid the next tragedy. If Christians don't have answers to this problem, who does? My hope and prayer is that a national conversation on the connection between gun violence and mental illness will begin among pastors and other Christian leaders."

Schenck, who is a new member of the NRA and was a Ring of Freedom Co-Chair at its recent national convention, is critical of the organization's role in the aftermath of events like the Isla Vista shooting.

"While I appreciate so much of what the NRA has done historically, it is not playing a constructive role in this situation. I would like to try to change that from the inside.

At the same time, evangelicals must be very careful about how we make alliances with secular organizations. When it comes to this question, the church and the NRA are not working from the same playbook. In my remarks in California, I will issue a strong caution about this to pastors and church leaders.”