

## **Bloomberg buys \$50 million in 'astroturf' ®**

*From F. Paul Valone, president of Grass Roots North Carolina, in response to "Bloomberg's new gun control group is a noble, shrewd effort" (April 20):*

According to the *News & Observer*, Michael Bloomberg and his "noble" group, "Everytown for Gun Safety" (EGS), represent "the will of the people", which has too long been "thwarted" by the NRA.

In truth, EGS is Bloomberg's latest foray into what political operatives call "astroturfing"<sup>1,2</sup> -- creating the appearance of popular support where none exists. It's introduction also showcased Bloomberg's narcissism as he pontificated: "I am telling you if there is a God, when I get to heaven I'm not stopping to be interviewed. I am heading straight in. I have earned my place in heaven. It's not even close."<sup>3</sup>

Bloomberg's first gun control effort was "Mayors Against Illegal Guns" (MAIG) which, thanks to an extraordinary number of criminal convictions<sup>4</sup> among members, earned the sobriquet "Illegal Mayors Against Guns." Apparently embarrassed by mayors resigning after proclaiming they'd been duped,<sup>5,6</sup> political ouster of their more strident number (including deposed Morrisville Mayor Jackie Holcombe), and the occasional sex offender making headlines<sup>7, 8, 9</sup>, MAIG pulled the membership roster from its website.<sup>10</sup>

Next was "Mom's Demand Action for Gun Sense In America" (MDA) which claims 130,000 members but recently turned out only six women and two babies to protest a hapless Staples outlet in Wake Forest.<sup>11</sup> Its state director, Kaaren Haldeman, claims ten paid staffers.<sup>12</sup> The question, until recently, was paid by whom?

For months, MDA hid its connection to Bloomberg, ignoring repeated requests for both financial reports and their IRS Letter of Exemption despite being legally obligated to provide both.<sup>13</sup> In January, the NC Secretary of State's office sent MDA a "compliance outreach" letter because it apparently fundraises in the state without the required Charitable Solicitation License.<sup>14, 15</sup> Only recently did a tiny disclaimer appear on MDA's donation page inviting you to make your check payable directly to -- ta-da! -- Mayors Against Illegal Guns.<sup>16</sup> (Fundraising under a false name is, after all, a crime. MDA now wisely advertises itself as a "campaign" of EGS.)<sup>17</sup>

Each time a Bloomberg front group wears out its usefulness, he folds it into another. This time, he's upped the ante with "Everytown for Gun Safety" which, strangely enough, seems to feature all the same players but with a billionaire's table stake of \$50 million.

The ostensibly mainstream media usually marginalizes Second Amendment advocates as "the gun lobby" or simply "the NRA." Our agenda, they insist, is dictated by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

The truth is exactly opposite: Limousine liberals like Bloomberg hire lobbyists and a few strident malcontents who are fawned over by media, but stymied by all-volunteer organizations like ours. They have money, but we have the grass roots. Don't believe me? Here's a challenge to

Haldeman: Let's hold simultaneous counter protests, at a mutually agreed time and place, and see who turns out more people.

Other astroturf® gun control groups carpetbagging here include "Americans for Responsible Solutions" (ARS), which came for a "dialogue with gun owners" but carefully hid from those gun owners,<sup>18</sup> and the fictitious "Americans for Gun Safety" -- which granted \$60,000 to North Carolinians Against Gun Violence but registered its lobbyists under "The Tsunami Fund" (no, they don't do disaster relief), itself a front for the hard left "Tides Center" in California.<sup>19</sup>

If you're having trouble keeping them straight, don't feel bad; that's the intent. Their latest ruse is to "mine" emails from petitions and share them between groups, each group claiming them as "members." Try this: Register an email address, sign any White House petition, then sit back and watch your email. In a recent debate, I pointed this out to ARS representative Peter Ambler, whose smirk in return faded when I said: "It should disturb you to know that *I* am one of your so-called 'members.'"

Ironically, Bloomberg got a taste of *real* grass roots mobilization when his minions neglected to register "Everytown for Gun Safety" on Facebook. Overnight, hundreds "Everytown for Gun Safety" pages popped up like mushrooms, directing people to bonafide gun safety programs.<sup>20</sup>

If you're tempted to laugh at Bloomberg's missteps, however, don't laugh too hard: As demonstrated when he financed "grass roots" demonstrators at the recent NRA convention,<sup>21</sup> fifty million bucks buys a lot of phony grass.

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#### References:

1. astroturf: "Creating the impression of public support by paying people in the public to pretend to be supportive. Astroturfing is the opposite of 'grassroots', genuine public support of an issue." <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=astroturf>
2. astroturfing: "The disguising of an orchestrated campaign as a 'grass-roots' event – i.e., a spontaneous upwelling of public opinion." <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/astroturfing>
3. "Bloomberg Plans a \$50 Million Challenge to the N.R.A.," Jeremy W. Peters, The New York Times, 4/15/14: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/us/bloomberg-plans-a-50-million-challenge-to-the-nra.html?hp&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/us/bloomberg-plans-a-50-million-challenge-to-the-nra.html?hp&_r=0)
4. "Criminal Behavior by Members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns": <http://www.nraila.org/news-issues/fact-sheets/2012/criminal-behavior-by-members-of-maig.aspx?s=&st=&ps=> An additional list of convictions, with newspaper article links, is available upon request.
5. "Former Bloomberg Ally Says 'Mayors' Group's Goal Is Gun Confiscation," The Washington Free Beacon, 2/6/14: <http://freebeacon.com/issues/former-bloomberg-ally-says-mayors-groups-goal-is-gun-confiscation/>

6. "GOP candidate Boughton quits Mayors Against Illegal Guns," Mark Pazniokas, The CT Mirror, 4/9/14: <http://ctmirror.org/boughton-quits-mayors-against-illegal-guns/>
7. "Marcus Hook's Mayor Arrested, Charged With Reckless Endangerment," myfoxphilly.com, 3/21/13: <http://www.myfoxphilly.com/story/21756962/mayor-of-marcus-hook-arrested>
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10. "MAIG removes members list from website after Bloomberg embarrassment exposed," examiner.com, 1/17/14: [http://www.examiner.com/article/maig-removes-members-list-from-website-after-bloomberg-embarrassment-exposed?CID=examiner\\_alerts\\_article](http://www.examiner.com/article/maig-removes-members-list-from-website-after-bloomberg-embarrassment-exposed?CID=examiner_alerts_article)
11. "Local mothers encourage gun safety," The Wake Weekly, 2/27/14: <http://www.wakeweekly.com/?s=moms+demand+action>, see also: <http://mashbang.wordpress.com/2014/02/28/suppose-we-held-a-rally-and-nobody-came/>
12. Statement made to Chapel Hill Town Council by Kaaren M. Haldeman, representing the North Carolina chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, January 10, 2014.
13. Letter from Paul Valone to Kaaren Mary Haldeman dated January 27, 2014, plus numerous calls from GRNC Treasurer Don Pomeroy to Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America national headquarters in Indiana went unanswered. Letter available upon request.
14. Email to Andrew J. Stevens dated January 22, 2014, which said in part (and with donation hyperlink): "Please consider making a donation in any amount right now. Your support will help us bring gun sense to our states and to our country." Email available upon request.
15. Email from Scarlett Gardner, NC Secretary of State Charitable Solicitation Licensing Division, to GRNC president Paul Valone dated February 3, 2014, which said in part: "The North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State Charitable Solicitation Licensing Division (CSL) is in receipt of your message below. CSL recently received notification that 'Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America' has been soliciting contributions in North Carolina. In accordance with CSL procedures for compliance outreach to unlicensed organizations soliciting in this state, a letter concerning licensure compliance was sent to this organization on January 27, 2014." Email available upon request.
16. Screen shot of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America page available upon request.
17. Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America donation page: [https://momsdemandaction.nationbuilder.com/donate?utm\\_campaign=flags\\_or\\_guns&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=momsdemandaction](https://momsdemandaction.nationbuilder.com/donate?utm_campaign=flags_or_guns&utm_medium=email&utm_source=momsdemandaction)
18. "Former Rep. Gabby Giffords, husband confirmed for Raleigh visit Sunday," Craig Jarvis, "Under the Dome," News & Observer, 7/5/14: [http://projects.newsobserver.com/under\\_the\\_dome/former\\_rep\\_gabby\\_giffords\\_husband\\_confirmed\\_for\\_raleigh\\_visit\\_sunday](http://projects.newsobserver.com/under_the_dome/former_rep_gabby_giffords_husband_confirmed_for_raleigh_visit_sunday)

19. Lobbyists for Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein, formerly registered for North Carolinians Against Gun Violence changed registration to the Tsunami Fund:  
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<http://www.examiner.com/article/exclusive-how-true-grassroots-activists-bested-bloomberg>
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