

How Common Ground Committee's "Finding Common Ground on Guns" Event Benefited Students

By Sophie Holtzman, Sophomore at GWU

Inspiring Hope

Common Ground Committee's [Finding Common Ground on Guns](#) event featuring Senator Chris Murphy and former Congressman Will Hurd included a pre-event conversation between Mr. Hurd, moderator Jackie Adams, and a select group of students from The George Washington University.

This conversation proved to be equally valuable for the students and Mr. Hurd, who was impressed by the questions and comments and even cited some of the students in his discussion with Senator Murphy. To one student's question, Mr. Hurd responded, "I need this kid to be my new foreign policy advisor!" One month after the event, Mr. Hurd hired that same student as an intern, a testament to the value of the small-group style pre-event conversation that CGC provided.

Students who attended the pre-event were raving about their interactions with Mr. Hurd afterwards, saying that speaking to a public figure in that setting gave them hope regarding the future of America's political climate.

Making Connections

Following the main event with Senator Murphy and Mr. Hurd, CGC hosted a VIP reception. The networking benefits of this reception cannot be understated – it truly felt like a room full of some of DC's best and brightest.

At this event, I was able to converse with Mr. Hurd, a policy advisor for the Senate HELP Committee, and a journalist who covered White House news, among many others. Having extended conversations with people who are living out my career goals was an absolute pleasure and eased my stress about entering the workforce after college. These conversations also led to sustained connections that I hope to keep long-term.

Since the event, I have reconnected with both Mr. Hurd and Ms. Darnall from the HELP committee one-on-one, and both connected me to their political contacts and graciously offered to be of service to my career goals in any way possible. Making these connections has put me a step ahead of my peers in regards to job applications and has also taught me about the wide variety of career opportunities in bipartisan politics.

Growing up, I never imagined meeting people who are so intertwined with national politics, let alone creating professional relationships with them. I have CGC to thank for making these relationships happen and bringing students together with their political role models.

Fostering Conversation

On October 12, 2022 BridgeGW hosted a follow-up discussion on the [Finding Common Ground on Guns](#) event. This discussion was moderated by BridgeGW's board and provided questions to get students thinking about gun policy and their takeaways from the event.

While we did not take a final count of how many students came to the discussion, BridgeGW's membership numbers grew to over 100 following the event. Many students reached out to us expressing how impressed they were with the event, and how interested they were in our follow-up discussion and our mission.

The discussion brought a diverse group of students from a variety of backgrounds and drew in gun owners as well as those who had never touched a gun before. Every student who came to the discussion was respectful, knowledgeable, and ready to learn. There was no need for hand-raising as students did not talk over each other at any point and the discussion flowed naturally from one topic to the next.

When discussing the event, students agreed that the speakers' points made them hopeful about both parties being able to collaborate on gun policy; and, when discussing gun policy themselves, the group unanimously supported some form of background checks by the end of the discussion, regardless of political party. A variety of topics were covered at the discussion, ranging from red flag laws to assault weapon bans, and the discussion proved to be a learning experience for all.

Because of the precedent set by the CGC event, there was a very positive energy surrounding bipartisanship at our discussion, and when our time slot in our reserved room ended many students were disappointed to end the conversation. We look forward to continuing this theme of riveting conversation and finding common ground with future events and discussions.

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