

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 26, 2012

To: Members of the House of Representatives

From: Representative Babette Josephs

Re: Co-sponsorship Request: Repeal certain provision of the Castle Doctrine

I plan to introduce legislation that would repeal certain provisions of the Castle Doctrine, specifically the recently enacted provisions that make it optional for one to seek retreat before using deadly force in the protection of oneself or others.

As you may be aware, Trayvon Martin – an unarmed Florida teen – was stalked, shot, and killed by a purported neighborhood watchman for seeming out of place in a posh, gated neighborhood. A month later, Trayvon’s perpetrator has not been brought to justice. He quickly invoked his right to self-defense. Statutory protections afforded Florida citizens in a state law titled “Stand Your Ground” – a law that is analogous to our Castle Doctrine – have seemed to stymie the fact-finding process on the part of Florida law enforcement officials. Unbelievably, in the last seven years, the Stand Your Ground law has been raised 130 times. Justifiable homicides reported to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement have increased threefold since the law went into effect in 2005.

One innocent life snuffed out accidentally is one too many. In Trayvon’s case, 911 audio tapes help provide insight as to how the events most likely unfolded; but I wonder just what the conversation would be today if no such audio tapes existed. As a legislative body, we should move proactively and learn from Florida’s egregious mistake. Please join me in co-sponsoring this legislation. You may contact Ms. Jennifer Belz in my Harrisburg office at 717-787-8529 or via e-mail at JBelz@pahouse.net. Thank you!