

'It's Okay to Not be Okay.' Rep. Cori Bush holds candid conversation with high school students



Sumner High School junior Stephon Riggins speaks on gun violence among young teens that took a classmate during Monday's listening session with Rep. Cori Bush at Sumner High School Monday, Mar. 14, 2022. At right is [Zipporah Lawal from Hazelwood East.](#)

"It's Okay." Those two words summarized the March 14 "Speak-In," listening session," at Sumner High School, hosted by U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, D-St. Louis. During the candid, one-hour, live discussion with students from area high schools, Bush repeatedly reminded them that it's normal to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, afraid, scared, or angry. "It's Okay to not be Okay," Bush stressed after students expressed concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, gun violence and racism. Her advice was also appropo for Cardinal Ritter High School student, Kenneth White, who confessed, "I fear leaving my house and the dangerous things happening such as being robbed, killed or more."

According to Bush's office, the event was designed to give students the chance to openly discuss issues that are affecting their daily lives. Bush and the panel of eight students addressed comments that had been submitted by high schoolers prior to the live event. Dr. Kelvin R. Adams, Superintendent of the St. Louis Public School District, who introduced Bush, opened the session on a serious note. A Sumner High School sophomore, Terrion Smith, 16, of the 4700 block of Newberry Terrace in north St. Louis, had been gunned down over the weekend. "This tragedy is the sort of thing that no child or teenager should ever have to cope with," Adams said. "However, many young people in our region face these issues directly or indirectly. It is a problem that will take all of us to solve. I'm hopeful today we can play a role in finding a solution." Almost all the students on the panel raised their hands after Bush asked if they had lost a loved one or a fellow student to gun violence. Steven Robinson, a senior at Vashon, reminisced about someone he'd lost a few weeks ago.

Russell Bill



Russell Warn “Russ” Bill, 80, passed away at 4:15am on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at Integrity of Godfrey. Russ was born April 29, 1941, in Ferndale, Michigan, to Russell and Thelma (Bethscheider) Bill. He married Betty Bilbruck on October 17, 1970, in Florissant, Missouri, and she survives. Other survivors include his daughter and son in law, Kathy and Drew Stevenson; his grandchildren: Juliana and Natalie Stevenson; and a sister Mariann Parkinson of Tampa, Florida.

Russ graduated from Dondero High School in Royal Oak, Michigan in 1959. He then graduated from DeVry Technical Institute in Chicago, Illinois. He was employed and retired from McDonnell Douglas/Boeing after thirty eight years. He was a member of the Boeing Employees’ Railroad Club, the American Flyer “S” Gaugers of the St. Louis Area, the National Railway Historical Society, St. Louis Railway Enthusiasts, St. Louis Theater Organ Society, Hazelwood School District PTA, and The National PTA. Russ drove the trolley at The Transportation Museum and volunteered with the Rails and Trails National Park Service. He enjoyed going to his granddaughters' activities, taking train trips and riding on trolleys.

In addition to his parents, Russ was preceded in death by his brother: Ronald Bill.

In accordance with his wishes, cremation rites will be accorded and no services are planned.

Pitchford Funeral Home in Wood River is in charge of cremation arrangements.



REP. CORI BUSH ANNOUNCES ‘CONGRESS IN YOUR CLASSROOM’ INITIATIVE



From left to right: Moriah Morrow (Villa Duchesne and Oak Hill School), Stephon Riggins (Sumner High School), Precious Barry (North Technical High School / Riverview Gardens), Regina Washington (Sumner High School), Congresswoman Cori Bush, Seven Robinson (Vashon High School), Zipporah Lawal (Hazelwood East), Kenneth White (Cardinal Ritter High School), Tania Daniels (Jennings High School)

ST. LOUIS, MO — Monday, [Congresswoman Cori Bush](#) (MO-01) unveiled a new program, “Congress in Your Classroom,” during a listening session with high school students from across the St. Louis region. “To give our youth the best future, we must do everything we can to support them in the present and address the traumas of their past,” said Congresswoman Bush. “I want them to know that their Congresswoman is available, accessible, and accountable to them. Through ‘Congress in Your Classroom,’ we’re making sure our students have their voices heard, know what Congress is doing for them, help shape and inform policies that affect their lives, and know that our office provides services that can help meet their needs. By bringing Congress to the classroom, we’re cultivating a new generation of changemakers in our communities who will know that their government works for them.”

“Congress in Your Classroom” will be a 3-part program that is centered around connecting youth with Congresswoman Cori Bush and her community outreach team.

The three parts of the program are:

- **Missouri First District’s Youth Council:** Every high school in St. Louis that wants to participate will have two seats at a recurring meeting with the Congresswoman.
- **Missouri First District’s Student Policy Advisory Board:** A smaller group that will advise the Congresswoman and her team on legislation and initiatives that our office should pursue.
- **School Visits:** Congresswoman Bush and her office will be visiting schools, meeting with students of all ages, to enhance civic engagement and connect youth with the resources that the



Rep. Bush wants to hear from young people, so she set up a way to do so

U.S. Rep. Cori Bush is launching a new initiative to incorporate feedback from local, young people in her decision-making.

The program, “Congress in Your Classroom,” calls for forming a youth council and a smaller youth advisory board to meet regularly with Bush. It gives the students a chance to share their thoughts and feedback about issues facing young people.

“This is to not only inform me on what to do in D.C., but is also to help pull in what they want to see,” Bush told St. Louis Public Radio. “What can we do to help bring more resources and to help make change right here in St. Louis?”

Bush, D-St. Louis County, announced the effort at a listening session for high school students at Sumner High School on Monday. Students from schools throughout Bush’s district attended the forum including Sumner, Riverview Gardens, Hazelwood East, Cardinal Ritter and Villa Duchesne.

Students spoke about mental health, especially in the Black community, and shared ways they’ve dealt with anxiety and stress at school.

Sumner junior Stephon Riggins said the conversation was especially needed for people who are afraid to speak out about these issues.

“People in general, in my community, we have a sense of feeling like nobody hears us, you know, not being heard or not having anybody to talk to about these problems that we have,” Riggins said. “We have that responsibility to speak out on these things for them to know that, look, you can talk, you can reach out.”