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Sen. Scott Beason catching flak over "empty the clip" comment

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By Charles J. Dean

Alabama State Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, (Bernard Troncale/Birmingham News)

State Sen. Scott Beason said he's been flooded with phone calls since saying at the end of comments on illegal immigration Saturday that Republicans need to "empty the clip, and do what has to be done."

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Beason said he was not urging violence against immigrants, but using an analogy.

"I did say that but it was completely taken out of context," said the Gardendale Republican. "Look, I'll take my beatings when I mess up. But no way was I urging anyone to do harm to Hispanics or illegal immigrants. I would never do that."

Since the comments were published in Sunday editions of the

Cullman Times

, some organizations that advocate for illegal immigrants have featured the story on their websites, and commenters in the blogosphere have weighed-in on exactly what they thought Beason did mean and whether they agreed with him .

The comment was made at the close of a Cullman County Republican Party breakfast. Beason said it did follow a series of comments he made about illegal immigration and how, with the GOP now in the majority in the Legislature, he hoped Alabama would move to toughen laws on illegal immigration.

But Beason said the quote stemmed from a story he told at the beginning of the breakfast.

"I began telling the story about a family visiting a big city when some guy with a knife or gun jumps out from behind some bushes and comes at them," Beason said. "The story talks about how a Democrat handles the situation, I think I said the Democrat tells the guy he'll put together a charity basketball league or something to raise money to help him. The second family, that father has a gun but takes only one shot. The third family, and that father also has a gun, but he empties the clip. He solves the problem."

Solving problems was one of the themes of Saturday's speech, Beason said.

"I think we face a lot of problems and we need to tackle them with everything we have, with all of our brain power, our imagination and with courage," Beason said. "That's what I meant by emptying the clip."

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Beason's use of the story comes almost a month after U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Gifford was shot and seriously wounded by a gunman as she spoke at a Tucson, AZ. supermarket. In all, 19 people were wounded and six were killed in the rampage. The attack sparked a national debate about incendiary rhetoric and the potential for political violence.

Beason acknowledged that his use of the story to make his point might not have been the best decision.

"Frankly, (I) didn't think about what happened in Arizona but I wish I had." Beason said.

"I think it was maybe the wrong example to use, but honestly I didn't call for violence to solve political problems."

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