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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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Vice President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Vice President Biden:

I write to you in support of your efforts to curb gun violence in the U.S. through your leadership of President Obama's gun violence prevention task force. As the task force readies recommendations for action, I encourage you to act boldly and present a set of comprehensive solutions to our nation's gun violence epidemic.

As you know, the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, is just the latest in our nation's long history of violent, gun-related massacres perpetrated by deranged individuals. Because such young children and their teachers were involved, this incident has caused deep reverberations in the public psyche, opening the potential for a real effort to address the causes of such frightening and tragic mass murders.

Yet, tragically, the 20 children and 6 adults who lost their lives in Newtown represent just a fraction of the gun deaths that afflict our nation. Each year, approximately 100,000 people in America are shot with a gun, and over 10,000 are murdered using a firearm. According to the Children's Defense Fund, in 2008 and 2009, 5,740 children — "one child or teen every three hours, eight every day, 55 every week for two years" — were killed by guns. The firearm homicide rate in the U.S. is nearly 19 times higher than the combined rate of other populous high-income countries.

There are, however, clear steps we can take to address this problem. Topping the list should be a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines and the availability of military-style assault weapons, both of which serve no civilian purpose other than to inflict mass carnage. We also must improve our nation's mental health system and increase the reporting requirements of mental health records to the NICS background check database, building upon improvements made following the mass shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007.

But there are also other needed reforms that must be included in a comprehensive solution. These are not radical ideas. Many, in fact, are supported by a significant strong majority of NRA members.

This past May, a survey conducted by a noted Republican pollster showed strong support, even among NRA members, for commonsense gun safety reforms. According to the poll, NRA members support:

- Requiring background checks for every gun purchase (74% NRA member support);
- Requiring background checks on gun shop employees (79% NRA member support);
- Prohibiting individuals on the terrorist watch list from purchasing firearms (71% NRA member support);
- Requiring gun owners to report to police when their guns are lost or stolen (64% NRA member supports); and
- Establishing minimum standards for concealed carry permits (63-75% NRA members support each standard)

These results are encouraging. They also highlight the vast schism between the NRA's leadership and the views of its members. Even as NRA leadership criticizes your forthcoming gun violence recommendations, please remember that the NRA is an organization out of step with its membership on many commonsense gun safety measures. While NRA leadership holds tight to its absolutist positions, the American public, including gun owners and rank-and-file NRA members, supports sensible actions to reduce gun violence in ways that do not undermine the 2nd Amendment.

As you finalize your plan to address gun violence in America, I strongly encourage you to put forward a broad array of proposals necessary to address our nation's epidemic of gun violence. Only a comprehensive strategy is up to this monumental task. Rest assured many in Congress are eagerly awaiting your recommendations and are willing to fight hard for the enactment of commonsense measures to protect the American public from gun violence.

Thank you again for your attention to this matter and your long-standing leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Jim Moran