



November 09, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Leader Pelosi,

CC: Members of Congress

On behalf of the 50 participating organizations in the Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence Coalition, we write to demand that you take immediate action to curb the onslaught of gun violence plaguing our nation.

On Sunday, November 5, twenty-six people, many of whom were children, were gunned down while worshipping at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Twenty other victims were injured, some of whom are still fighting for their lives. Together, with communities of faith across the country, our hearts ache for the victims, their loved ones, and the entire First Baptist Church community.

The massacre in Sutherland Springs is now the deadliest shooting at a house of worship in modern American history. Fourteen fatal shootings have taken place at houses of worship since 2012, including the devastating murders at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina and the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. It is horrifying that innocents were massacred in a house of worship once again, a terrifying reality for all people of faith in this country who believe that their congregations are sanctuaries of peace, safety, life, and love.

The tragic news is devastating, but it is not surprising. Too many students and teachers, concert-goers, community members, and people of faith in houses of worship across the country have been brutally murdered like the worshipers in Sutherland Springs. Three of the five deadliest shootings in modern American history have taken place in the last 17 months. Two of these five have occurred in just the last 35 days. Every day, guns kill 93 Americans and injure 200 more. These tragedies are alarmingly frequent, yet preventable.

As we continue to learn more about this tragedy, our questions remain. Why did the shooter have access to military grade weapons of war? Why was a man who was sentenced to a year in military prison for assaulting his wife and infant stepchild allowed to purchase an AR-15, the same weapon used by the murderers in Aurora, Orlando, Las Vegas, Sandy Hook, Umpqua, and San Bernardino? How many more innocent Americans must die before our lawmakers gather the necessary courage to stand up to the gun industry and the NRA and pass common-sense gun safety laws?

The answers to these questions go far beyond empty calls for thoughts and prayers; they require action. We read in James 2:14, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Leviticus 19:16 instructs us, "Do not stand idly by while your neighbor's blood is shed." As organizations of faith, we



strongly believe in the power of prayer. And yet, we know that prayer is a call to action rather than a substitute for it.

Although we represent many different faith traditions, we are all called to speak out against violence and advocate for common-sense solutions to stop these massacres. Accepting this charge, we urge Congress to take the following actions:

- **Oppose expanded concealed carry reciprocity legislation, which seeks to turn our houses of worship into congregations armed with guns and weaponry.**
- **Establish universal background checks and close the private sale loophole.**
- **Repeal the Dickey Amendment and restore funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for research on gun violence.**
- **Close the Charleston loophole, which permits federally licensed dealers to sell guns if three business days pass without a verdict from the FBI.**
- **Ban the purchase and sale of assault weapons.**
- **Enact a gun violence restraining order law, which would temporarily prohibit an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms when deemed by a judge to pose a danger to self or others.**
- **Ban the purchase and sale of high capacity ammunition magazines.**
- **Oppose legislative efforts to deregulate the purchase and sale of gun silencers.**
- **Close the boyfriend loophole, which allows convicted abusers and stalkers to buy and own firearms.**

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our coalition's legislative priorities with you. All people in our beloved country deserve to feel safe in their houses of worship and their communities; inaction is immoral and wrong. The message that we deliver today is urgent – lives are on the line and there is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence and the following participating organizations:

African American Ministers In Action
African Methodist Episcopal Church - Social Action Commission
Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bishops United Against Gun Violence
Bon Secours Health System, Inc.
Bon Secours Kentucky Health System
BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz



Catholic Health Association of the United States
Catholic Health Initiatives
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
CHURCH WOMEN UNITED, INC.
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Disciples Justice Action Network
Dominican Sisters of Peace
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Faith in Public Life
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Justice Institute
God Before Guns
Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence
Jewish Women International
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Metropolitan Community Churches
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service and Campaign Nonviolence
Pax Christi USA
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc
Rabbinical Assembly
Rabbis Against Gun Violence
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Sikh Council on Religion and Education
Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington DC
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Leadership Team
The Episcopal Church
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Women
Washington National Cathedral
Women of Reform Judaism