

Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence

United Methodist Building, 100 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC

January 15, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

On Martin Luther King Day, January 17, 2011, 24 national faith groups announced the formation of “Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence,” a diverse coalition of denominations and faith-based organizations united by the call of our faiths to confront America’s gun violence epidemic and to rally support for policies that reduce death and injury from gunfire. Two years later, we have grown to more than 40 groups representing tens of millions of Americans in faith communities across the nation – and our call to confront this epidemic has grown ever more urgent and imperative.

The recent loss in Newtown of 20 innocent young children, of the teachers and administrators that cared for them, and of a desperately troubled young man and his mother, tears our hearts and minds to the core. Faith leaders in Newtown have been on the front line of responding to the grief and pain of the families whose loss is unimaginable, and of the entire community there. Across the country, we grieve with our own congregants and communities, and we share their determination to do all within our power to ensure that this never happens again.

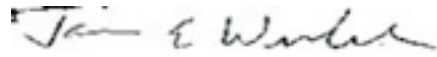
In light of the tragedy in Newtown – and in Aurora, Tucson, Fort Hood, Virginia Tech, Columbine, Oak Creek, and so many more – we know that no more time can be wasted. Gun violence is taking an unacceptable toll on our society, in mass killings and in the constant day-to-day of senseless death. While we continue to pray for the families and friends of those who died, we must also support our prayers with action. We should do everything possible to keep guns out of the hands of people who may harm themselves or others. We should not allow firepower to kill large numbers of people in seconds anywhere in our civil society. And we should ensure that law enforcement has the tools it needs to stop the virtually unrestrained trafficking of guns.

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence member organizations, representing millions of people across the country, urge you to respond to this crisis in our nation. With each day that goes by, dozens more of our children, parents, brothers, and sisters are lost to gun violence. We support immediate legislative action to accomplish the following:

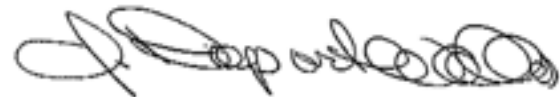
- **Every person who buys a gun should pass a criminal background check.** Preventing dangerous people from getting firearms has to be a top priority. Universal background checks via the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) should be utilized in every gun sale, including guns sold online, at gun shows, and through private sales.
- **High-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines should not be available to civilians.** There is no legitimate self-defense or sporting purpose for these military-style, high-capacity weapons and magazines. They are, however, the weapons of choice for those who want to shoot and kill a large amount of people quickly. It’s time to build off of the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 and draft an updated law that will take these weapons off our streets.
- **Gun trafficking should be made a federal crime.** Currently, prosecutions only happen through a law that prohibits selling guns without a federal license, which carries the same punishment as trafficking chicken or livestock. We must empower law enforcement to investigate and prosecute straw purchasers, gun traffickers, and their entire criminal networks.

In recent weeks, the American people have come together in a national outpouring of grief and sympathy for the families of victims slain in the mass shooting in Newtown. We share in that grief, but will not let it substitute for action. We look forward to working with you to enact these common-sense measures to reduce gun violence. Should you or your staff have questions or need additional information, please visit our website at www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org or contact our National Coordinator, Vincent DeMarco, by email at demarco@mdinitiative.org or by phone at 410-591-9162.

Sincerely,



James Winkler
Chair, Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence
General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church



Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Director, Social Action Commission
African Methodist Episcopal Church



Carol Blythe, President
Alliance of Baptists



Dr. Walter L. Parrish, II, Executive Minister
American Baptist Churches of the South



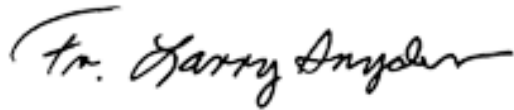
Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, Executive Director
American Baptist Home Mission Societies



Shan Cretin, General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee



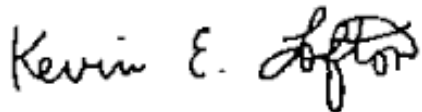
Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, Program Coordinator
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America



Father Larry Snyder, CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Sister Carol Keehan, D.C., President and CEO
Catholic Health Association



Kevin E. Lofton, President and CEO
Catholic Health Initiatives



Fred Rotondaro, Chairman of the Board
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good



James Salt, Executive Director
Catholics United



Stanley J. Noffsinger, General Secretary
Church of the Brethren



Djamillah Samad, National Executive
Church Women United, Inc.



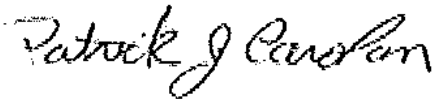
Very Rev. John Edmunds ST, President
Conference of Major Superiors of Men



Rev. Ronald J. Degges
Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



Sr. Margaret Ormond, O.P. and the Leadership Team
Dominican Sisters of Peace



Patrick Carolan, Executive Director
Franciscan Action Network



Diane Randall, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation



Marlene Feagan, President
Health Ministries Association

Bryan Miller, Executive Director
Heeding God's Call

Suhag Shukla
Executive Director and Legal Counsel
Hindu American Foundation

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, National Director for Interfaith and Community Alliances
Islamic Society of North America

Rabbi Steve Gutow, President,
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Rabbi Mordecai Leibling,
Jewish Reconstructionist Movement

Janet Mock, CSJ, Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, Director
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office



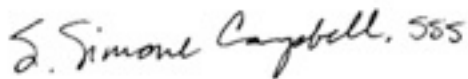
Sister Gayle Lwanga,
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd



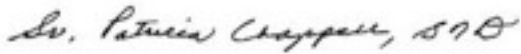
Peg Birk, Transitional General Secretary
National Council of Churches



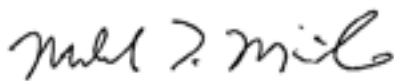
Matthew Ellis, Executive Director
National Episcopal Health Ministries



Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby



Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director
Pax Christi USA



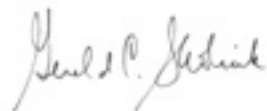
Pastor Michael McBride, M.Div.,
PICO Network Lifelines to Healing



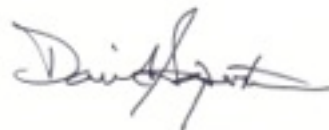
Reverend J. Herbert Nelson, II, Director for Public Witness
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness



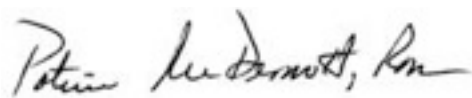
Dr. Carroll Baltimore, President
Progressive National Baptist Convention



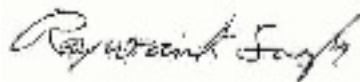
Rabbi Gerald Skolnik,
Rabbinical Assembly



Rabbi David Saperstein, Director and Counsel
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism



Sister Patricia McDermott, RSM, President
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas



Dr. Rajwant Singh, Chairman
Sikh Council on Religion and Education, USA



Rev. Jim Wallis, President and CEO
Sojourners



Rev. Craig C. Roshaven, Witness Ministries Director
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, General Minister and President
United Church of Christ



Harriett Jane Olson, CEO and General Secretary
United Methodist Women



Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton, Chairman
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development



Rabbi Steven Wernick, Executive Vice President and CEO
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism



The Very Rev. Gary Hall,
Washington National Cathedral



Rabbi Marla Feldman, Executive Director
Women of Reform Judaism