

December 4, 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 Members of Congress,

As former military leaders, we took an oath to support and defend the Constitution and developed considerable expertise in the use of firearms. As Americans, we find the current level of gun violence to be unacceptable. And as members of the Giffords Veterans Coalition, we believe that there is much Congress can do to reduce gun violence without violating the Second Amendment -- which we explicitly support. And we call on you to act.

The church shooting in Sutherland Springs and the massacre in Las Vegas are but the latest episodes of shocking horror that Americans have suffered in recent months and years. As you may know, Americans are 25 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than citizens of other developed nations, and the number of such deaths in 2016 spiked to 38,000. In light of recent events, an especially compelling statistic is that, between 2001 and 2012, over 6,400 American women were murdered by intimate partners using guns -- more than the total number of US service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is no acceptable excuse for our elected leaders to avoid addressing this as a national crisis. Credible polling, in fact, shows that our representatives on Capitol Hill are no longer speaking or voting for the majority of Americans, including gun owners, on gun-related issues. Such specific matters as background checks, safety training, bump stocks, other particularly lethal guns and accessories, public health research, suicide prevention, protecting the laws on the books, and more can all be addressed within every reasonable interpretation of the Second Amendment. Additionally, the failure of the Defense Department and the states to properly report domestic violence convictions to the background check system is unacceptable and must be addressed.

It is past time to begin the serious discussion about what legislation is possible and feasible to reduce the gun carnage that destroys families, tears apart communities, and traumatizes us all. Thoughts and prayers will not bring solutions.



We do not pretend that addressing our nation's gun violence crisis will be quick or easy, but we know for certain that it is your duty. We fully understand that it will require statesmanlike leadership and moral courage across party lines. And we know that every day without such action costs more American lives and increases the potential for future horrific tragedy. We strongly urge you to move forward with enacting solutions to reduce gun violence in our country, and we offer our assistance.

Sincerely,

Admiral Thad Allen, USCG (Ret.)
General Peter W. Chiarelli, USA (Ret.)
General Wesley Clark, USA (Ret.)
General Michael V. Hayden, USA (Ret.)
General James T. Hill, USA (Ret.)
Admiral James M. Loy, USCG (Ret.)
General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA (Ret.)
Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN (Ret.)
General David H. Petraeus, USA (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Lee Gunn, USN (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Mark Hertling, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Russel Honoré, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Claudia J. Kennedy, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Norman R. Seip, USAF (Ret.)
Brigadier General Stephen A. Cheney, USMC (Ret.)
Rear Admiral James Barnett Jr., USN (Ret.)