

August 19, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

We write to you today from an America we no longer recognize.

As veterans, we have been willing to put our lives on the line for our country. Yet we can't protect Americans from the gun violence epidemic here at home. This month's shootings served as a stark reminder of how this crisis is ravaging the country. A killer fueled by hate and racism took the lives of 22 people and injured dozens in El Paso, Texas, while just 13 hours later, another senselessly murdered nine more and injured 26 in Dayton, Ohio.

Every day, 100 Americans die from gun violence. And yet for far too long, calls from a majority of Americans to pass commonsense gun laws have been met with indifference from our leaders. It doesn't have to be this way.

Since September 11th, the United States has spent trillions of dollars combating terrorist threats abroad. But the unfortunate reality is that Americans motivated by homegrown hate and extremism are responsible for more [American deaths over the past decade](#) than sympathizers of al-Qaeda and other foreign terrorist groups. Now is the time to confront domestic terrorism and gun violence with the same focus and national consensus we've applied to combatting international terrorism.

While hate can fester in any corner of the world, our country's weak gun laws represent a glaring vulnerability to American security. Last year, the [Southern Poverty Law Center reported](#) a record-high number of active hate groups in the United States. When we allow these hate-filled individuals to purchase and possess firearms, the consequences can be deadly. Every year, there are more than [10,000 violent hate crime attacks involving firearms](#) in our country. Passing stronger gun laws is not only the right thing to do—it's critical to our national security.

It is painful and tragic to fight for our security abroad only to return home and confront a country torn by hate and awash in unregulated guns. The power of this country has always come from embracing our diversity. Together, we stand; divided, we fall.

We write to you today to ask that you take these security threats to our nation seriously, and advance commonsense gun safety legislation, like H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. You have the power to condemn the violent, hateful rhetoric taking root in communities across the country, and to take action to address it.

Our time in service was dedicated to leaving our country a safer place. We ask you to use your time in service to do the same.

Sincerely,

General Peter W. Chiarelli, USA (Ret.)

General Michael Hayden, USAF (Ret.)

General James T. Hill, USA (Ret.)

Admiral James Loy, USCG (Ret.)

General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA (Ret.)

Lieutenant General Mark Hertling, USA (Ret.)

Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré, USA (Ret.)

Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy, USA (Ret.)

Lieutenant General Norman R. Seip, USAF (Ret.)

Commander Carlos Del Toro, USN (Ret.)

Captain Terron Sims, II, USA (Ret.)

Shawn VanDiver, USN (Ret.)