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13 February 2013

The Honorable Michael Thompson
Chairman
Gun Violence Prevention Task Force
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am writing on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police, the oldest and largest law enforcement organization in the United States, to thank you for including the FOP in the discussions leading up to the release of the recommendations of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

The FOP strongly supports several measures, all absolutely critical elements of addressing gun violence, in the comprehensive plan put out by the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

These measures are:

- Supporting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens;
- Expansion of background checks on firearm purchasers;
- Improving the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS);
- Reinvigoration of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to ensure that it has the tools and resources necessary to its mission;
- Develop legislation to address penalties for firearms trafficking;
- Supporting responsible gun ownership;
- Improved law enforcement access to mental health records in the context of firearms acquisition; and
- Funding to put more State and local law enforcement officers on the street.

With the horrible tragedy in Newtown, the increased number of mass shootings in our country, and, candidly, the gun violence which happens on some scale every day in big and small municipalities across the country, many plans are being offered to curb the violence and better protect our citizens. We were happy to see many of the ideas we discussed in Task Force meetings were included in your plan.

As we have discussed, the most logical starting point to address gun violence is the expansion of the background check system. Incomplete or absent background checks create a gaping hole in

— BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION —



the wall between firearms and criminals. Loopholes in the background check system give criminals unprecedented opportunity to access firearms. This problem must be remedied quickly. An expanded and improved background check system will provide the first level of defense against criminals arming themselves.

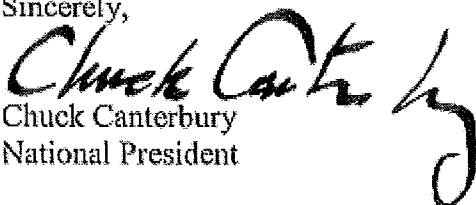
We greatly appreciate your recommendation to expand the resources available to ATF to combat firearms trafficking. ATF provides invaluable assistance to State and local law enforcement officers and agencies engaged in the ongoing battle against the violent criminal misuse of firearms. It is also necessary to provide ATF with the resources and manpower necessary to enforce the laws already on the books. As things stand now, ATF has been scraping by with a dwindling number of agents and other resources while ATF's mission has expanded. Frankly, this is unacceptable. For too long we have denied ATF the proper resources and our nation and our children have paid the price. We also believe specific penalties must be incorporated into the Gun Control Act of 1968 for illegal firearms trafficking. This addition would greatly assist ATF agents during the investigation and prosecution process.

In addition, local and State law enforcement agencies, who have been hit so hard by our nation's ongoing financial woes, need the resources to put more officers on our streets and in our neighborhoods. Federal programs assisting State and local law enforcement have been cut to the bone and beyond, with more cuts on the way. There are jurisdictions out there telling civilians bluntly that they will have to defend themselves because their agencies do not have the manpower to respond. Proactive and community-oriented policing, key strategies of our nation's anti-crime strategy, are rapidly becoming impossible because our local and State law enforcement agencies lack the resources and manpower.

Along with comprehensive background checks, better access to mental health records is critical to keeping guns out of the wrong hands. Without access to these records, law enforcement, at all levels of government, is handicapped which gives the criminal element the advantage. And, most obviously, State and local law enforcement need the resources and manpower to better target and reduce gun crimes. These are all common sense, easy fixes which will have far-reaching impact and better equip our law enforcement officers to fight gun violence and protect our citizens.

On behalf of the more than 330,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, I thank you for your willingness to work with us on these issues. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in my Washington office.

Sincerely,


Chuck Canterbury
National President