

# *Kentucky Faith Leaders for the Prevention of Gun Violence*

March 13, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

We, in the faith community, have buried too many brothers, sisters, sons and daughters struck down early because of senseless gun violence. From Lexington to Newtown, and Paducah to Aurora, all children deserve to be safe in their schools and neighborhoods. We are writing today, united in purpose, to ask that you give voice to all those who have been lost, their families and their communities by supporting sensible gun violence prevention legislation.

Just as the nation was recovering from the horrific shootings this last year in Oak Creek and Aurora, Newtown happened and, once again, shook our nation to the core. While our grief and prayers continue, we must urgently move forward on common-sense legislation that reduces gun violence here in Kentucky and all across America.

To that end, we urge you to support three specific steps that Congress can and must take to reduce gun violence across the nation. These include:

1. **Every person who buys a gun should pass a criminal background check.** Preventing criminals and the mentally ill 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.
2. **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.
3. **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.

There is overwhelming support for these measures by Americans across all political, demographic and geographic lines, including strong support among gun owners.

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A mid-2012 poll, conducted by Republican pollster Frank Lutz, showed that 74 percent of NRA members and 87 percent of non-NRA gun owners support requiring criminal background checks of anyone purchasing a gun. Background checks are the only systematic way to stop domestic abusers, the seriously mentally ill, felons and other criminals from buying firearms. But the background check system is broken, creating easy ways for dangerous people to purchase firearms.

We know that when states have closed loopholes in their background check laws, they have reduced gun violence. For example, analysis of FBI and Florida Department of Law Enforcement data shows the number of women killed with a firearm by an intimate partner is 38 percent lower in states that have required a background check before every handgun sale than in states that do not.

Furthermore, we know that in states where there are strong gun violence prevention laws, such as Massachusetts, there have been dramatic declines in violent crimes that involve a gun. In fact, Massachusetts -- with its ban on assault weapons and its required criminal background checks -- achieved the lowest gun fatality rate in the nation at three gun deaths per 100,000 people. In contrast, that number sits at 10 out of every 100,000 nationwide. We can and must do better.

Just as the faith community has met in the political center and found common ground on this issue, we urge you to work with your colleagues to do the same. None of these measures present a threat to Second Amendment rights, yet all of them present an opportunity to make our communities safer places to live. Now is the time for action.

With urgency and respect,



The Rev. Richard Burden, PhD  
Priest-in-charge  
Our Saviour, Madison County



Rabbi Sharon L. Cohen, Family Support Liaison  
Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates



The Rev. Cn. Amy Real Coultas  
Christ Church Cathedral  
Louisville



Marlene Feagan, President  
Health Ministries Association  
Dayton

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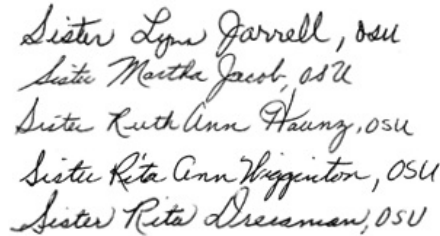
Rev. Kent H. Gilbert, Pastor  
Union Church  
Berea



Matthew L. Goldberg, Director, Community  
Relations  
Jewish Community of Louisville, Inc.  
Louisville



The Rt. Rev. W. Douglas Hahn, D. Min., Bishop  
The Episcopal Diocese of Lexington  
Lexington



Sister Lynn Jarrell, OSU, President  
Sister Martha Jacob, OSU, Vice-President  
Sister Ruth Ann Haunz, OSU, Councilor  
Sister Rita Ann Wigginton, OSU, Councilor  
Sister Rita Dressman, OSU, Councilor  
Ursuline Sisters of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky



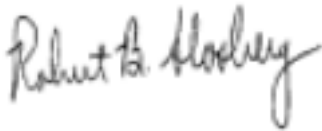
Rabbi Marc Kline  
Temple Adath Israel  
Lexington, Kentucky



Rev. Betty Louise Meadows  
Mid-Kentucky Presbytery  
Louisville



Sr. Judy Morris, OP  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
Louisville



Rabbi Robert Slosberg  
Congregation Adath Jeshurum  
Louisville

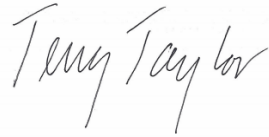


Uri Smith, Former Rabbi  
Ohavay Zion Synagogue  
Lexington

# *Kentucky Faith Leaders for the Prevention of Gun Violence*



Sister Sharon Sullivan, OSU, Congregational  
Leader  
Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph  
Maple Mount



Terry Taylor, Executive Director  
Interfaith Paths to Peace  
Louisville



Rev. Michael Ward, President  
Executive Board of the Kentucky Council of  
Churches  
Lexington



The Right Reverend Terry A. White  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky  
Louisville



Rabbi Michael Wolk  
Keneseth Israel Congregation  
Louisville



Rabbi David Wortman, Editor  
Shalom Newspaper  
Lexington



Judy B. Wortman, MSW, Executive Director  
Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass  
Lexington