

May 6, 2012

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2471 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

SENT VIA FAX TO 202.225.3974 - 3 PAGES  
SENT VIA USPS TO ABOVE ADDRESS

Dear Chairman Issa and Representative Cummings:

This letter is on behalf of a number of my fellow survivors and loved ones of victims of the mass shooting in Tucson that took the lives of six people and wounded 13 others, including your colleague, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords.

We are a diverse group of Republicans, Independents, Democrats, gun owners, small business owners, a school counselor, hunters and a retired military officer. As diverse as we are, we are united by our deeply personal resolve to be a force to stem the violence from illegal guns. In the year and a half since that horrible day, the failings of our legislators to take even one single step to help prevent more senseless murders, is more than a disappointment to us, it is a slap in our collective faces.

In November of last year, our "family" of Tucson survivors, along with more than 50 other gun violence survivors from around the country traveled to Washington to attend a Senate Crime Subcommittee hearing about the Tucson shooting and legislation by Senator Chuck Schumer that would fix the broken background check system – the very system that allowed Jared Loughner to slip through the cracks. We expected that every Senator would not only be eager but feel obliged to have a serious discussion about ways to keep guns out of dangerous, wrong hands while keeping secure the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding people – it was a heartbreak and disappointment to learn that was not the case.

Instead, Senator Grassley chose to dismiss the reason for the hearing and used his time questioning a witness from the Obama Administration about the "Fast and Furious" scandal. Senator Grassley continued to badger the witness with questions about which he had no ability to testify. I was told by the other survivors that as I gave heartfelt testimony about our horrible experience, Senator Grassley exhibited disrespect for the lives of those murdered that January 8, by focusing on his Blackberry instead of my words.

Another extreme disappointment to our Tucson "family" was the fact that neither of the Arizona Senators could take a few minutes to meet with their own constituents about this deadly serious matter. Instead, Senators Kyl sent several of his staffers to meet with us and McCain sent a member of his staff to meet with us. After several later requests to Senator Kyl, he met with some of us in Tucson. Even though we continue to make requests to Senator McCain to meet with us, he continues to ignore our requests. After our D.C. visit and our lack of response when we returned home, we were forced to come to terms and admit a disappointing fact to ourselves – you, our legislators, have incredibly little interest in learning about the bloodshed and horror that we witnessed, or, even more disturbing, in helping preventing future tragedies. We seemed only to be some part of your political games instead.

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Chairman Issa and Representative Cummings:

That hurtful episode was refreshed for us when we read of your plan to spend more of your time and our precious tax dollars on contempt charges against Attorney General Eric Holder about how many "Fast and Furious" documents he has given to you, and who knew what when. This prompts us to respectfully give you an opinion from outside Washington.

As survivors of gun violence, we have mourned the murder of Border Agent Brian Terry, prayed for his family, and hoped that not one other loved one should have to endure such pain and suffering. Agent Terry may have been killed with a gun that ATF agents allowed to fall into the wrong hands in that sting operation that went horribly wrong. His family deserves justice, and our government needs to insure this kind of thing never happens again. We understand safeguards have been put in place to achieve that.

We try not to question your motives, but as American taxpayers and victims of gun violence, we feel we have the right to question your priorities.

Since the first hearing with the Attorney General discussing "Fast & Furious" a year ago, more than 31,000 Americans have been killed with guns. We will never know how many of those murders could have been prevented with a better background check system – a cause, by the way, that when surveyed, most Americans, including most gun owners, say they want.

And yet, while we cannot turn on our televisions without hearing about "Fast & Furious," neither Congress nor the President have taken any action to fix the system. This in spite of the fact that background checks have absolutely nothing to do with our Second Amendment rights.

During this same period of time, more than 15,000 Mexican citizens have been murdered, mostly by drug gangs using assault rifles bought right here in the U.S. and trafficked south. Those guns are used to traffic drugs north into our home state of Arizona and other citizens' home states. Many of those deaths might have been prevented with a federal gun trafficking statute with serious penalties for criminal gun buyers. But neither you, our Congress, nor the President have taken a single step to pass such a law.

Representative Issa, we understand that as Chairman of the Oversight Committee, your job is oversight. But you are also a member of the Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over gun laws. We wish you had used some of your obvious passion, intelligence and commitment to insist that the committee address the pathetically weak gun laws that are one of the real causes of Agent Terry's death, one of the real causes of another 31,000 American deaths every year, and one of the real causes of 15,000 Mexican murders!


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Chairman Issa and Representative Cummings:

Whether Attorney General Holder has given you enough documents, or the right documents, is beyond our scope of knowledge. But we do know that he seems to be the only one talking about the need for common sense gun laws, including a better background check system and tougher laws to fight gun trafficking.

We have a sincere, heartfelt and respectful request of you: When you finish your investigation into "Fast & Furious," will you please, please, please pledge to commit the same time, energy and taxpayer money to legislate common-sense laws that respect the Second Amendment, keep guns out of the wrong hands, and reduce the number of Americans being killed with guns every day?

We can only imagine how such actions on your part before January 8, 2011 might have changed the outcome of our lives. We can hope and imagine how such actions on your part NOW will keep others from ever experiencing a similar repeat of our tragic, sad Saturday morning at Congress on Your Corner.

Respectfully,



Patricia Maisch

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