



Office of the Mayor
Hon. Stephanie A. Miner, Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: December 20, 2012

CONTACT: Alexander Marion
Press Secretary (315) 448-8044

**MINER CALLS ON PRESIDENT,
CONGRESS TO ENACT COMMON
SENSE GUN CONTROL MEASURES**

*Letter, Signed by Members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns,
Offers Common Sense Actions to Curb Gun Violence*

Miner: “Never Again” Until Next Time Is Not Acceptable

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – Mayor Stephanie A. Miner today signed onto a letter sent by the [Mayors Against Illegal Guns Coalition](#) to President Barack Obama and copied to House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell calling on the federal leaders to work together to develop new solutions for addressing gun violence in the wake of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

The Mayor noted according to [The Telegraph of London](#), there have been over 30 mass shootings in the United States since the 1999 Columbine High School shooting.

“Too often after these tragedies, the refrain becomes ‘never again’ until the next tragedy,” said Mayor Stephanie A. Miner. “That is not acceptable. We must use this tragedy as a catalyst to ensure substantive, common sense change is made to our federal firearms laws.”

In their letter, the Mayors offer three common sense legislative proposals to prevent future tragedies:



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- **Require every gun buyer to pass a criminal background check:** Background checks are the only systematic way to stop felons, domestic abusers and other dangerous people from buying firearms. These checks are instantaneous and highly effective. Since its inception, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) has blocked firearms purchases at licensed dealerships by millions of individuals who are barred by federal law from owning them. But criminals and other prohibited purchasers avoid these checks by buying firearms, including online and at gun shows, from unlicensed “private sellers” who are not required by federal law to conduct the checks. Millions of gun sales — estimated at more than 40 percent of the U.S. annual total — are conducted through private sellers. The Fix Gun Checks Act (H.R.1781 / S.436) would close this enormous gap in our laws by requiring a criminal background check for every gun sale.
- **Get high capacity rifles and ammunition magazines off our streets:** Military-style weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines have no appropriate civilian or sporting function. They are designed to kill large numbers of people quickly. They are also disproportionately used to kill law enforcement officers; approximately one out of five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty is killed with assault weapons. The time has come to review the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 and draft a new law that is clear and enforceable and will take these weapons out of our communities.
- **Make gun trafficking a federal crime:** Today, there is no clear and effective statute making gun trafficking a crime. Prosecutors are instead forced to rely on a weak law prohibiting engaging in the business of selling guns without a federal license, which carries the same punishment as trafficking chicken or livestock. As a result, according to the Justice Department’s Inspector General, U.S. Attorneys decline to prosecute 25 percent of those cases while declining only 9 percent of drug conspiracy cases. Mayors Against Illegal Guns supports proposals to empower law enforcement to investigate and prosecute straw purchasers, gun traffickers, and their entire criminal networks.

Mayor Miner has been a member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns since taking office in 2009. She was a strong advocate in their successful fight against federal concealed carry reciprocity legislation which would have decimated local and state level gun control laws. Below is a copy of the Mayor’s letter.



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December 19, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

On Friday, December 14th the entire nation watched as parents stood outside the Sandy Hook Elementary School and waited, desperately hoping to be reunited with their children. That moment will never end for the families of the 20 children and six adults who were murdered that day at the school.

As mayors, we are charged with keeping our communities safe. But too many of us have sat with mothers and fathers of children killed with guns. Twenty-four children enrolled in public schools in your hometown of Chicago were shot to death just last year.

At the moving memorial service on Sunday evening, you said: “If there is even one step we can take to save another child or another parent or another town from the grief that has visited Tucson and Aurora and Oak Creek and Newtown and communities from Columbine to Blacksburg before that – then surely we have an obligation to try.”

Our bipartisan coalition of more than 750 mayors has joined forces with over 700,000 Americans and more than 100 survivors of deadly shootings, including the mass shootings you mentioned in your remarks. Together, we urge you to put forward an agenda that is rooted in common sense and that will make it harder for dangerous people to possess guns, and easier for police and prosecutors to crack down on them. That agenda should:

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Those ideas require action by Congress, but there steps you and your Administration could and should take immediately to curb gun violence:

- **Appoint an ATF director:** The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), the federal agency responsible for enforcing our gun laws, has gone without a confirmed director for more than six years. During that time, criminals and those with serious mental illness have been able to take advantage of insufficient enforcement of existing federal gun laws, and an estimated 72,000 Americans have been murdered with

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guns. In 2011, for the first time in over a decade, more police officers were shot to death in the line of duty than were killed in automobile accidents. The need for leadership at the ATF has never been more urgent. The time has come for you to make a recess appointment to fill the vacancy at the top of the ATF.

- **Prosecute prohibited purchasers who attempt to buy firearms, ammunition or high-capacity magazines:** The Justice Department should vigorously prosecute felons and other prohibited purchasers who fail gun background checks. In 2009, the Federal Bureau of Investigation referred more than 71,000 such cases to ATF, but U.S. Attorneys ultimately prosecuted only 77 of them. Prosecuting these offenders is a goal broadly supported by our coalition and the National Rifle Association. The Department should also develop a mechanism for sharing NICS denial information with local and state law enforcement officials by sending them active alerts; or, at a minimum, posting the information at the National Criminal Information Center so state and local law enforcement officials can access it during investigations.
- **Require federal agencies to report records to NICS:** The NICS Improvement Act of 2007 requires federal agencies to submit mental health, substance abuse and other records that prohibit a person from owning a gun to NICS. However, few agencies comply. In October 2011, the FBI provided data to MAIG on reporting by 60 federal agencies. Of those 60 agencies, 52 had given zero mental health records to NICS. Although total federal agency reporting of mental health records increased by ten percent between March and October 2011, to 143,579, the vast majority of those records had been submitted by one agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs. Even fewer federal agencies are reporting drug abusers. Only three agencies — the FBI, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Court Services and Offenders Supervision Agency (CSOSA), the probation and parole services agency for the District of Columbia — have submitted any substance abuse records, and the vast majority of federal agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, have not submitted a single substance abuse record. The president should issue an executive order requiring all federal agency heads to certify twice annually, in writing, to the U.S. Attorney General that their agency has submitted all relevant records to NICS.
- **Repeal remaining Tiahrt restrictions:** While Mayors Against Illegal Guns and our law enforcement allies have made progress in relaxing the “Tiahrt restrictions,” which are

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riders to the federal budget that restrict access to federal gun data, some still remain. These remaining restrictions keep the public, particularly researchers and elected officials, in the dark about gun traffickers – specifically, who they are and how they operate. It also requires the FBI to destroy records of approved NICS background checks within 24 hours. That makes it harder to detect law-breaking dealers who fake their records, or to identify straw buyers who undergo the checks on behalf of someone who couldn't pass. The Tiahrt Amendments also say ATF can't require dealers to inspect their inventory, which could reduce the tens of thousands of guns that go missing or are stolen each year. Finally, the police and other law enforcement agencies that get trace data can't use it in license revocation proceedings or in civil litigation. The administration should repeal these restrictions in its next budget.

In the past few days, the American people came together in a national outpouring of grief and sympathy for the families of victims slain in the mass shooting in Newtown. We share in that grief. But our constituents are also outraged and looking for leadership from the White House. We look forward to working with you to find a solution to gun violence in our country.

Signed by Members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns

CC: Majority Leader Harry Reid, U.S. Senate
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker John Boehner, U.S. House of Representatives
Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of Representatives

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