Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 23, 2013

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. President,

Following the recent announcement of your gun control legislative package, we the undersigned Members of Congress are concerned that the proposals you outlined do not fully consider the voices of millions of law-abiding Americans who support the Second Amendment.

On December 14, 2012, the entire country was shaken by the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We extend our deepest sympathies to the victims' families and the entire Sandy Hook community. Understandably, this crime has sparked a national dialogue about whether there are steps that could have prevented this tragedy, but this dialogue must proceed in a manner that is consistent with our nation's rights and values. We believe that at its core, the problem is not the absence of law, but rather a lack of respect for human life and human dignity.

It is also our expectation, and your constitutional obligation, that you will work with Members of Congress in pursuing all of the Administration's proposals through the legislative process, rather than unilateral action by the Executive Branch. The American people deserve and the U.S. Constitution requires a transparent and open discussion on issues of such national importance. This constitutional process provides a voice for all Americans. The desire for prompt action should never cause us to overlook our founding document, our most sacred beliefs, the Constitution. Like you, we have sworn our allegiance to the Constitution, with the full understanding that nobody—not even the President of the United States— is above its principles.

Your proposals do not adequately recognize that simply having access to a firearm does not cause murderous intent or criminal nature. Countless more children who are raised in homes with lawful firearms do not commit crimes than those who do. That is why it is most important that we gain an in-depth understanding of the malice, and probable mental illness, from which these criminals suffer. A gun does not turn an otherwise law-abiding citizen into a murderer, but that gun may protect a law-abiding citizen from one.

Significantly absent from your proposals were the voices of the many Americans who protect themselves and their families, who prevent crime, and who participate in sport lawfully under the Second Amendment. Since December 14, gun purchases by law-abiding Americans have increased – not decreased. Since December 14, membership in organizations supporting the Second Amendment, such as the National Rifle Association, has increased – not decreased.

While your proposals assume the answer is more laws and fewer guns, millions of other Americans want an increased ability to protect themselves and their families. As we remember the victims of Sandy Hook, let us not overlook the many citizen heroes who have prevented or thwarted similar tragedies with their right to bear arms. Whether it is the convenience store clerk from Battle Creek, Michigan who protected himself and his customers from a robbery because he was armed with a gun, or a single mom guarding her baby during a home invasion– guns are used every day to make this country safer. In fact, guns are used every day in this country to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Again, we are all here under an oath to our Constitution to serve the American people. That a proposal would not pass both houses of Congress is not a justification to circumvent Congress, but all the more reason why we must respect the constitutional process of law-making. As Supreme Court Justice Thomas Clark cautioned, "Nothing can destroy a government more quickly than its failure to observe its own laws, or worse, its disregard of the charter of its own existence."

Sincerely,

Members of Congress

Dan Benishek MD (MI-01)

Don Young (AK)

Tom Cotton (AR-04)

Matt Salmon (AZ-05)

David Schweikert (AZ-06)

Trent Franks (AZ-08)

Doug LaMalfa (CA-01)

Doug Lamborn (CO-05)

Ted Yoho (FL-03)

Bill Posey (FL-15)

Lynn Westmoreland (GA-03)

Austin Scott (GA-08)

Phil Gingrey M.D. (GA-11)

Steve King (IA-04)

Randy Hultgren (IL-14)

Marlin Stutzman (IN-03)

Luke Messer (IN-06)

Todd Young (IN-09)

Mike Pompeo (KS-04)

Brett Guthrie (KY-02)

Thomas Massie (KY-04)

Andy Barr (KY-06)

Charles Boustany M.D. (LA-03)

John Fleming M.D. (LA-04)

Bill Cassidy M.D. (LA-06)

Candice Miller (MI-10)

Kerry Bentivolio (MI-11)

Blaine Luetkemeyer (MO-03)

Sam Graves (MO-06)

Alan Nunnelee (MS-01)

Steven Palazzo (MS-04)

Renee Ellmers (NC-02)

Walter Jones (NC-03)

Robert Pittenger (NC-09)

Chris Gibson (NY-19)

Tom Reed (NY-23)

Brad Wenstrup D.P.M. (OH-12)

Bob Gibbs (OH-18)

Markwayne Mullin (OK-02)

Mike Kelly (PA-03)

Trey Gowdy (SC-04)

Kristi Noem (SD)

Phil Roe M.D. (TN-01)

John Duncan (TN-02)

Marsha Blackburn (TN-07)

Louie Gohmert (TX-01)

John Culberson (TX-07)

Randy Weber (TX-14)

Bill Flores (TX-17)

Pete Olson (TX-22)

Roger Williams (TX-25)

Michael Burgess M.D. (TX-26)

Rob Bishop (UT-01)

Chris Stewart (UT-02)

David McKinley (WV-01)

Rick Crawford (AR-01)

Tim Griffin (AR-02)

Steve Womack (AR-03)

Cory Gardner (CO-04)

Jeff Miller (FL-01)

Dennis Ross (FL-15)

Paul Broun M.D. (GA-10)

John Shimkus (IL-15)

Lynn Jenkins (KS-02)

Steve Scalise (LA-01)

Tim Walberg (MI-07)

Billy Long (MO-07)

Mark Amodei (NV-01)

Sam Johnson (TX-03)

John Carter (TX-31)

Tim Huelskamp (KS-01)

Paul Gosar D.D.S. (AZ-04)

Michele Bachmann (MN-06)

Steve Daines (MT)

Steve Stivers (OH-15)

Glenn Thompson (PA-05)

Lou Barletta (PA-11)