



FAITHS UNITED

TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

May 17, 2021

United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Committee Members:

Religious communities in the United States understand that gun violence in our country is an attack on human dignity. We have seen our houses of worship targeted in mass shootings, we have grieved with our members who mourn those lost to homicides and suicides, and we have expressed dismay at how easily conflicts turn deadly due to easy access to guns. We need principled leaders to address gun violence and that is why we write today to express our strong support for the nomination of David Chipman as Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). As a decorated law enforcement professional, veteran ATF special agent, and gun safety expert, Chipman is uniquely qualified for this position and should be quickly confirmed.

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence is a coalition of more than 50 faith-based organizations that together represent tens of millions of religious Americans in communities across the nation and in each of your states. We believe that God calls us to create a society with wise leadership. In Proverbs 11:14, we read that, "Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." We believe that David Chipman will be a wise leader at ATF. Throughout his 25-year career at ATF, Chipman worked on all aspects of the agency's mission, from investigating some of the most serious incidents of terrorism of the 1990s, including the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993 and Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, to investigating a series of racially motivated arsons that destroyed a number of predominantly Black houses of worship in Alabama. Chipman also has experience in leadership positions at ATF, including as Division Chief of the Office of Public and Governmental Affairs. In his supervisory roles, Chipman managed hundreds of agents, partnered with dozens of communities and was responsible for execution of ATF's operational budget in all 25 field divisions and an annual budget in excess of \$150 million.

Since his service at ATF, Chipman has worked on gun violence prevention efforts by educating policymakers, advocates, and community leaders. Faith communities can trust him because he has built a reputation as a smart, honest, and principled voice with a track record to prove it. We believe that David Chipman's leadership at ATF will help bring about a more just society where everyone is free to pursue their God-given potential.



We at Faiths United have placed our collective strength behind a vision of violence-free communities that is deeply rooted in our diverse religious traditions. Our faiths call us to create a safer world where we can participate in everyday activities like going to school, attending a concert, or praying in our houses of worship without the fear of violent death. We should not have to take it for granted that violence will erupt in our public spaces and communities. For too long, gun violence in our communities has been ignored and Congress has turned a deaf ear to the many voices clamoring for change. We believe it is a moral crisis when, in the midst of the continuous and tragic Covid-19 epidemic, our policy leaders are slow to act, if they act at all. Our faith traditions call us to a different vision. As people of faith, we are called by God to offer an alternative to the resigned acceptance of gun violence that is a symptom of a larger, societal culture of death that accepts violence as the norm and relies solely on guns for security.

We deeply feel the urgency of this moment and the pain of every life lost to gun violence. We believe Chipman is uniquely qualified to lead ATF and this is a uniquely important time for the U.S. Senate to confirm him to this position. ATF is the only federal agency charged both with enforcing federal gun laws and providing regulatory oversight of the gun industry, but has been relying on acting leadership since 2015 and only had one Senate-confirmed director since 2003. We need Senate-confirmed leadership at ATF and our faith communities are watching, praying, and taking action to see it happen.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action
BPFNA -- Bautistas por la Paz
DC Area Interfaith GVP Network
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Franciscan Action Network
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
God Before Guns
Jewish Women International
Methodist Federation for Social Action
National Council of Jewish Women
Pax Christi USA
Temple Micah, Washington, DC
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries