



# FAITHS UNITED

## TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, and members of Congress,

On behalf of our faith-based organizations and those we represent, we write today to urge you to oppose the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017, H.R. 38, and the Constitutional Concealed Carry Act of 2017, S. 446. These pieces of legislation undermine the safety and wellbeing of our communities in a time when Americans face epidemic levels of gun violence. Every year, approximately 36,000 people die due to gun violence in the United States. Sadly, this senseless violence takes a particular toll on the most vulnerable among us, robbing individuals and communities of their inherent human dignity and their right to a safe, secure and just environment. From underserved communities of color to victims of domestic violence and their families – the most vulnerable in our nation are the most deeply affected by this tragic and preventable form of violence. As faith communities, we stand united in our opposition to concealed carry reciprocity legislation and urge Congress to focus on policies that will prevent gun violence and reduce the loss of innocent life.

States have a wide variety of laws that govern who can carry concealed, loaded weapons in public places. While some states have strong laws that require extensive firearms training, other states issue permits to individuals using much lower standards, even to non-residents of the state. Twelve states do not require any permit or training to carry a concealed weapon in public. Federal concealed carry reciprocity legislation would force states with the strongest laws to honor the permits of states with the weakest laws. These bills do not create a strong national standard for carrying concealed weapons; instead, these proposals reinforce a confusing patchwork of state laws and allow individuals without any training to carry loaded firearms in our communities. There is no conscience or respect in this type of policy. It violates the safety of all communities, even those who have taken strong action to promote safety in their neighborhoods.

As faith communities committed to protecting those most in need, we are especially concerned that federally mandated concealed carry reciprocity would endanger the lives of victims of domestic abuse and their loved ones. The firearm homicide rate for women in the U.S. is 16 times higher than in other similarly developed countries. [1] The nexus of intimate partner violence and firearms violence is especially lethal – the mere presence of a firearm in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide for women by five times. [2]

Victims of domestic violence often relocate across state lines to escape their abusers and seek refuge in states with stronger firearms protections. Federally mandated concealed carry reciprocity would require that states with strong protections for victims of abuse accept the permits of states with weaker protections, grossly violating the sanctuary sought by people fleeing their abusers. Understanding the risks without acting to mitigate them is irresponsible. It destroys the moral fabric of our nation and erodes our ideals of equality and justice.

At a time when gun violence infiltrates our streets, our neighborhoods, our movie theaters, our houses of worship, and our schools, permeating all areas of life, we urge you to oppose policies that will undermine community safety, including concealed carry reciprocity legislation. We would be eager to discuss with you our coalition's priorities, such as strengthening and expanding background checks, improving data collection efforts, and empowering community-based solutions. On behalf of the faith communities we serve, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence and the following participating organizations:

African American Ministers In Action  
African Methodist Episcopal Church - Social Action Commission  
Alliance of Baptists  
AME Church - Social Action Commission  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Bishops United Against Gun Violence  
Bon Secours Health System, Inc.  
Bon Secours Kentucky Health System  
Catholic Health Association of the United States  
Catholic Health Initiatives  
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good  
CHURCH WOMEN UNITED, INC.  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
The Episcopal Church

Episcopal Peace Fellowship  
Faith in Public Life  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Global Justice Institute  
God Before Guns  
Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence  
Jewish Women International  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service and Campaign Nonviolence  
Pax Christi USA  
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Rabbis Against Gun Violence  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Sikh Council on Religion and Education  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Leadership Team  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society  
United Methodist Women  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Washington National Cathedral  
Women of Reform Judaism

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[1] Grinshteyn, E., & Hemenway, D. (2016). Violent death rates: the US compared with other high-income OECD countries, 2010. *The American journal of medicine*, 129(3), 266-273.  
[2] Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (2003): 1089-1092, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447915/>.