

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



Office of the Executive Director
CHRIS W. COX

January 3, 2013

Dear Representative:

I would like to welcome you to the 113th Congress and wish you the best in dealing with the many challenges facing our country.

The National Rifle Association of America is made up of over four million men and women and transcends every socio-economic, racial, religious and partisan line. We have members in every state and every congressional district in America. For 18 years, I have traveled across our great country meeting our members and I'm honored to represent them as the Executive Director of the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action.

Our members – and our mission – are all about safe and responsible gun ownership. Our members love their country and love their neighbors. They join the NRA because they love their freedom – including the 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The NRA has a long and proud history of teaching safe and responsible gun ownership. Our “Eddie Eagle” children’s safety program has taught over 25 million young children that if you see a gun “Stop. Don’t touch. Leave the area and tell an adult.” As a result, firearm accidents are at the lowest levels since the government began keeping records over 100 years ago.

For adults, the NRA has over 80,000 certified instructors to teach our military, law enforcement and average American men and women how to safely use firearms. The 2nd Amendment does not require us to fund these programs. We provide this as a service to our fellow Americans. We do more – and spend more – than any other individual, group or government entity teaching safe and responsible gun ownership. Promoting firearm safety is integral to our mission of defending the freedoms we all enjoy.

Sadly, these very freedoms have come under attack in recent weeks.

In the wake of the Newtown tragedy, every American family has had the same conversation: how do we help make sure this never happens again?

Now that debate moves to Washington, with the swearing-in of this new Congress and the promise of a legislative package in the coming weeks from Vice President Joe Biden.

Many in Washington will be tempted to paper over our national grief with quickly-passed new laws that will be broken by those bent on evil, just as evildoers break our current laws. Instead of that paper-thin answer to a deep cultural problem, Congress should have a broader discussion that includes mental health, school security, Hollywood's violent marketing to our kids, as well as our 2nd Amendment right to keep and bear arms.

Long-time gun ban advocates like Sen. Dianne Feinstein have made it clear that gun control laws will be debated, and Vice President Biden's task force is sure to propose them. Indeed, Sen. Feinstein has announced that her new bill would ban millions of commonly owned semi-automatic firearms, going far beyond the ban she authored in 1994. She has even hinted at mandatory firearms confiscation through a federal government "buy-back" program.

The four million men and women of the National Rifle Association will be a constructive voice in this debate and we are confident about its outcome.

We know that the facts prove gun bans do not work and that is why they are not supported by a majority of the American people. Gallup polls taken after the Newtown tragedy indicate that opposition to a handgun ban in America is at an all time high and a renewal of the 1994 Gun Ban is opposed by a majority of Americans.

Even as the majority in our country rejects gun bans, we should all agree that criminals who misuse firearms should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Unfortunately, the Obama administration has overseen a collapse in the prosecution of those misusing firearms. According to the most recent FBI statistics, federal weapons prosecution levels are down 27% from their peak in the prior administration. This must change and we call on Congress to insist that it does.

There is equal consensus in our country that we must take a new and hard look at the bureaucratic nightmare that is our mental health system. We have created almost insurmountable obstacles to involuntary commitment of the kind of disturbed people who commit mass murders, shackling their own family members who wish to protect themselves and their neighbors.

It must become our focus as a nation to keep these desperately ill human beings from harming themselves or the rest of us who play by the rules. The common thread in each and every high-profile mass shooting has been that red flags were seen, but ignored. We need a national effort to address those with mental problems who are a danger to themselves and others with the same vigor we promote awareness campaigns to address gambling, alcohol and drug addictions.

We at the NRA are not simply looking to keep certain types of firearms out of the hands of the mentally unstable. We need to find a way to keep ALL weapons out of the hands of the mentally ill.

If the mental health and law enforcement systems need more tools to identify the unstable, Congress should help them. We can all come together and agree to do that and we should not settle for anything less.

The NRA is also ready to help secure our schools. Last month we announced an initiative to help

local educators strengthen school security procedures and Congress should join us. This is not a search for a “one size fits all” solution; rather, it is an effort to assist those at the local level in ensuring that our schools are made safer. Former Congressman Asa Hutchinson has agreed to lead our efforts with only one condition from the NRA – find the best people and develop the best program.

While criticized by many in the media, having an armed presence at schools is not a new or controversial idea. President Bill Clinton started the “Cops in Schools” program during his administration and by the 2009-10 school year 28% of public schools had some sort of armed security on campus. Surely we can all agree that our children deserve the same level of protection at schools that is afforded to bank customers, airline passengers and – yes – elected officials.

Congress and the Obama Administration must also question the violence we allow those in the entertainment industry to pipe into our homes and into the video games our children play. The entertainment industry has a responsibility to help clean up our culture and Congress should encourage it to do so. Like many parents, I am personally driven by the verse in the Book of Proverbs that says “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Now is the time for us to ask for a higher standard from our culture.

Speaking in Newtown, President Obama reminded us that no set of laws can eliminate evil in the world. He is right. Humanity is inherently fallen and we should all be humble enough to admit it.

The President challenged us as Americans to come together and be honest about the fact that we are not doing enough to protect God’s children. He is right about that as well.

The four million men and women of the NRA grieve for the people of Newtown. We love our country. We believe in peaceful communities and rule of law. We know we can guard our freedom and guard our children too.

Let’s have the courage to take a serious look at what has happened to our culture and fix it before this happens again.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our Federal Affairs division at 202-651-2560. I look forward to working with you personally in the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris W. Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "C" and "W".

Chris W. Cox
Executive Director, NRA-ILA