

December 19, 2012

On the same day our nation learned in horror that 20 first graders and six educators were gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary School, young people around the country were learning if they had been accepted to their favored colleges and universities. For many years now, our nation's leaders have engaged in fevered debates on higher education, yet lawmakers shy away from taking action on one issue that prevents thousands of young people from living lives of promise, let alone realizing their college dreams. That issue is gun safety.

Among the world's 23 wealthiest countries, 80% of all gun deaths occur in the United States and 87% of all children killed with guns are killed here (*Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*). In 2010, 2,694 young people were killed by gunfire. 1,773 were victims of homicide; 67 were elementary school-age children. If those children and teens were alive today, they would fill 108 classrooms of 25 each.

We are college and university presidents. We are parents. We are Republicans, Democrats and Independents. We urge both our President and Congress to take action on gun control now. As a group, we do not oppose gun ownership. But, in many of our states, legislation has been introduced or passed that would allow gun possession on college campuses. We oppose such laws. We fully understand that reasonable gun safety legislation will not prevent every future murder. Identification and treatment of the mental health issues that lie beneath so many of the mass murders to which we increasingly bear witness must also be addressed.

As educators and parents, we come together to ask our elected representatives to act collectively on behalf of our children by enacting rational gun safety measures, including:

- Ensuring the safety of our communities by opposing legislation allowing guns on our campuses and in our classrooms
- Ending the gun show loophole, which allows for the purchase of guns from unlicensed sellers without a criminal background check
- Reinstating the ban on military-style semi-automatic assault weapons along with high-capacity ammunition magazines
- Requiring consumer safety standards for all guns, such as safety locks, access prevention laws, and regulations to identify, prevent and correct manufacturing defects

The time has long since passed for silence and inaction on the issue of reasonable and rational gun safety legislation. We hereby request that our nation's policy leaders take thoughtful and urgent action to ensure that current and future generations may live and learn in a country free from the threat of gun violence.

Respectfully,

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