

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Reid,

The gun violence epidemic in America knows no geographic boundaries and we believe that the response to this epidemic from Congress should know no political boundaries.

In 2015, there were 372 mass shootings in the United States. Tragedies in Charleston, Chattanooga, Colorado Springs, San Bernardino, and too many other cities sent shockwaves across our nation. Now, terror and hate have ripped through Orlando at the hands of an individual armed with a military-style assault weapon. Congress must take action to address this epidemic of gun violence.

One step that we all should be able to agree on is to study the problem, in order to understand the causes and characteristics of gun violence and the best strategies to prevent future tragedies. Yet policymakers, healthcare practitioners, researchers, and others lack comprehensive, scientific information because gun-violence prevention research has ground to a halt. The principal reason is that, since 1996, Congress has included an annual appropriations rider prohibiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from lobbying for gun control. Specifically, the rider provides that none of the funds made available to the CDC may be used “to advocate or promote gun control.” Unfortunately, this rider has been misconstrued as a ban on supporting scientific research into the causes of gun violence and has chilled practically all research efforts.

The author of the original rider, former Representative Jay Dickey (R-AR), now supports funding CDC gun-violence prevention research and believes that the rider should not impede it. As Representative Dickey and Mark Rosenberg, Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC from 1994 to 1999, have stated together: “Both of us now believe strongly that federal funding for research into gun-violence prevention should be dramatically increased. . . . However, it is also important for all to understand that [the rider’s] wording does not constitute an outright ban on federal gun-violence prevention research. It is critical that the appropriation contain enough money to let science thrive and help us determine what works.”¹

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-for-collaboration-on-gun-research/2015/12/25/f989cd1a-a819-11e5-bff5-905b92f5f94b_story.html

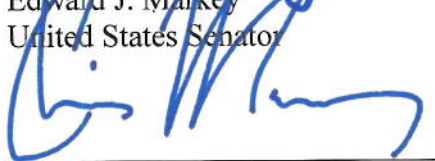
We oppose the inclusion of the Dickey rider in any future appropriations legislation. We must take the important step of funding gun-violence prevention research. Only the United States government is in a position to establish an integrated public-health research agenda to understand the causes of gun violence and identify the most effective strategies for prevention.

As the Senate considers FY2017 appropriations bills, we urge you to remove this and any other anti-gun-safety policy riders, and to support potentially life-saving funding for gun-violence prevention research.

Sincerely,



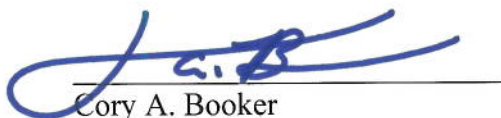
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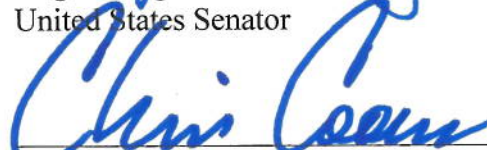
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United States Senator



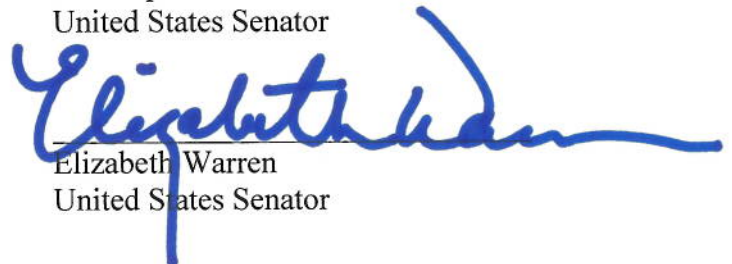
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