

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on the Judiciary**  
Washington, DC 20515-6216  
One Hundred Fifteenth Congress

November 1, 2017

Chairman Bob Goodlatte  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In recent weeks, our citizens and, individually, Members of Congress have focused on and discussed various issues related to the scourge of firearms violence that plagues our country. However, this Committee has taken no action. Inaction, when there are issues that we must examine and steps Congress must take, is no longer an option.

To be clear, we are not writing simply because of the high toll of death and injuries in Las Vegas, but because – despite progress we have made in decreasing crime in our country over the past two decades – on average, more than 11,000 people are murdered with guns in America every year, and more than 60,000 individuals are injured in an attack.

Congress has a responsibility to find a way to help prevent tragedies like Las Vegas, as well as the daily incidence of gun violence in our communities. That responsibility starts in this Committee, and we are disappointed that this Committee has not addressed this issue at all this Congress.

In fact, when legislation weakening our laws on silencers and armor piercing ammunition was being prepared for floor consideration, this Committee waived jurisdiction, despite a request from the Ranking Member that it not do so. The Committee simply let it go – without a hearing or markup – as if it didn't merit our time or attention. Of course, we opposed those provisions because we believed they would take us in the wrong direction by making us more vulnerable to gun violence. We are glad the Speaker has now indicated that he has no plans to bring that bill to the floor.

Although these concerns are broader than the “bump stock” issue that has come to light because of the Las Vegas shooting, clearly these devices pose a danger to our citizens, and our laws regarding these devices must be formally examined. We are grateful that representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) provided a briefing to staff on October 13, but we believe the Committee should convene a formal hearing, the first in a series to examine gun violence, to receive testimony concerning bump stocks and their status under current law.

At the briefing ATF explained their classification decision with respect to bump stock devices, leaving their sale and possession unrestricted under federal law. In addition, the ATF Association has recently provided a written explanation of this decision, stating that ATF may only make rulings based on the statutory authority contained in the law, and that it “cannot change the law to add new accessories that do not fall within the scope of existing law.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, multiple bills have now been introduced in the House to change the law. However, Speaker Ryan recently stated that he believes a regulatory approach by ATF is the appropriate way to address bump stocks.

Given the need to examine what bump stocks are and the way they allow shooters to substantially increase their rate of fire, in addition to questions about the scope of current law and which approach is best to take to protect our citizens, the Committee must, at the very least, hold a hearing to discuss the range of issues related to these devices.

Our overall objective on these issues must be to protect our citizens from becoming victims, whether it is from a mass attack or any other, sadly more common act of gun violence. Indeed, we do not need mass attacks to remind us of the urgency of the issue, as each day’s news in communities across our country should tell us.

It is long overdue for us to conduct hearings on the issue of gun violence, and to adopt legislation intended to strengthen our gun laws. We hope that the Committee will take up the issue of gun violence, including an examination of bump stocks, as soon as possible.

Every day of inaction is a lost opportunity to do something about this.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Michael R. Bouchard, President, ATF Association, to Representative Carlos Curbelo (Oct. 12, 2017) (available at <https://www.atfassociation.org/>)

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