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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

ARIZONA AFTERMATH: SENATE FAILURE TO CONFIRM ATF CHIEF UNDERMINES AGENCY

Why ATF's top-level vacancy is hurting efforts to crack down on illegal guns

Firearms Policy Experts Available for Interview

Preventing more mass shootings like Tucson, Virginia Tech and Columbine requires smarter gun laws and tougher enforcement. The Arizona killings underscored the fatal role that gaps in the law and routine underfunding play in undermining law enforcement. The role that a leadership gap plays is less well known, but also devastating.

For the past four and a half years, the Senate has failed to approve a permanent director at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the key agency charged with enforcement of those gun laws. Instead, the agency has operated under a succession of four acting directors without the full authority and force of the office. In those 1,623 days, more than 50,000 Americans have been murdered by firearms. 34 more Americans are murdered by firearms each and every day.

President Obama has nominated ATF Special Agent Andrew Traver, an experienced law enforcement official, to the post, but Senate delays have kept him from taking office. In 2007, Senators blocked another capable nominee, Michael Sullivan, President Bush's appointee for ATF Director.

To fight gun crime, we need tough leadership at the federal level. Leaving ATF without a director has significant consequences:

- **Inadequate Funding:** The chronic leadership void leaves ATF at a disadvantage within the administration, especially in competing for the budget it needs. From Fiscal Year 2001 to 2008, ATF's salaries and expenses budget increased by only 28%, while DEA's increased 36%, the Marshals' 51%, and the FBI's by 103%. Appropriations for DHS and Immigration and Customs Enforcement grew by 135% in only six years. At the same time, ATF has been asked to take on new challenges, especially combatting gun trafficking to Mexican cartels. As next year's budget is developed, all of these agencies have Senate-confirmed leaders to fight for the funding they need. ATF does not.

- **Inadequate Leverage and Authority with Congress:** The absence of a real director leaves ATF without a spokesman empowered to respond forcefully to congressional initiatives. In particular, opponents of strict gun law enforcement are pushing legislation, deceptively called the "ATF Modernization Act" (H.R.2296/S.941), that would gut the agency's enforcement powers, including the authority to crack down on corrupt gun dealers. Without a confirmed director, ATF cannot respond with the needed force and effect.
- **Failure to Fully Enforce Existing Laws.** More than a year and half ago, Mayors Against Illegal Guns presented to the Obama Administration its *Blueprint for Federal Action on Illegal Guns*. The *Blueprint* sets out forty common-sense ways to keep Americans safe through tougher enforcement of laws already on the books. To date, the administration has acted on only one of them. We need a director at ATF to take charge and make more of these critical reforms.

The more than 550 members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns have called on the Senate to confirm Special Agent Traver. Read the letter:

http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/letter_to_senate_supporting_traver_nomination.pdf

Nearly 20,000 Americans have signed a grassroots petition urging Senators to do so. For more information, visit www.topcopnow.org.

Available for Interviews

- **Edgar Domenech**, former Acting Director and Deputy Director of ATF who conducted VA Tech investigation and current New York City Sheriff
- **John Feinblatt**, Chief Advisor to NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg for Policy and Strategic Planning
- **Arkadi Gerney**, Special Advisor to Mayor Bloomberg on firearms policy and staff for Mayors Against Illegal Guns

About Mayors Against Illegal Guns

Mayors Against Illegal Guns is a bi-partisan coalition of 550 American mayors, co-founded by Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Menino. The mayors have come together around a simple, straightforward idea: respect the rights of responsible law-abiding Americans and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, drug abusers, the mentally ill, and other dangerous people.

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