



An Open Letter from 225 Mayors to Congress About Illegal Guns

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, and Minority Leaders McConnell and Boehner:

For the last few years, Congress has been undermining police work by quietly refusing to allow police and prosecutors access to crucial crime-fighting information. **We urge you to put an end to this stealth attack on law enforcement, known as the Tiahrt Amendment.**

As Mayors, our highest responsibility is protecting public safety, and that begins with giving our police officers the tools they need to do their jobs. And they need those tools now more than ever: violent crime is on the rise across the nation, and in both big cities and small towns, police officers face the increasingly dangerous problem of criminals with easy access to illegal guns.

To crack down on illegal gun trafficking rings and keep illegal guns out of the hands of criminals, police officers need information called "trace data." When a gun is recovered at a crime scene, police can trace its serial number to learn who bought and sold that one gun. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) has aggregate trace data for all guns recovered at crime scenes – yet for the last few years, Congress has prevented police and prosecutors from seeing it.

This means that police can't find out which dealers most frequently sell guns used in crimes (a sign the dealer is breaking federal law), or which people most frequently buy guns used in crimes (a sign the buyer is illegally trafficking guns and selling to criminals). It forces police to investigate gun crime one shooting at a time instead of attacking it at its source.

Why is Congress blocking police officers from this data? Allegedly, to protect the anonymity of undercover officers, but there is not a single instance to support this claim, as even the ATF has admitted. The real reason, of course, is special interest politics. As Congressman Tiahrt himself told the *Washington Post* in 2003: "I wanted to make sure I was fulfilling the needs of my friends who are firearms dealers."

Access to trace data has nothing to do with the Second Amendment, the rights of hunters and sportsmen or the rights of gun dealers – the vast majority of whom run honest businesses and obey the law. It is about law enforcement, plain and simple.

A nationwide, bi-partisan coalition of mayors is strongly opposing re-authorization of the Tiahrt Amendment, and we are being joined by 10 national police organizations – including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, and Major Cities Chiefs Association – and 23 state and regional police organizations, including the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police and the Texas Association of Chiefs of Police, as well as the American Hunters and Shooters Association.

America can't afford a Congress that is soft on crime. This new Congress has a chance to stand up – and stand with us – in the fight for public safety by ending the Tiahrt Amendment. Will you?

Sincerely,
Mayors Against Illegal Guns

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