

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 9, 2017

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey  
1700 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Texas Governor Greg Abbott  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

California Governor Jerry Brown  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez  
490 Old Sante Fe Trail  
Room 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governors Ducey, Abbott, Brown, and Martinez,

We write to encourage you, as governors of Border States, to take necessary action to stop illegal gun trafficking. Earlier this year, President Donald Trump and President Enrique Peña Nieto released a joint statement discussing the importance of a bilateral relationship that stops illegal guns and arms sales. Yet during his first month in office, President Trump signed a bill into law to weaken background checks and make it easier for individuals with a severe mental illness to purchase firearms, a regulation that had been implemented after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The devastating impacts of guns falling into the wrong hands transcend our borders and the increased availability of U.S. guns has fueled transnational criminal organizations operating in countries with track records of extreme violence, such as Mexico.

Several academic studies have linked increased armed violence in Mexico with lax gun laws in the United States, especially after the Assault Weapons Ban ended in 2004.<sup>i</sup> Gun-related murders in Mexico have risen from over 2,600 in 2002 to 13,000 in 2016.<sup>ii, iii</sup> Gun violence has inflicted every aspect of Mexican society where victims include individuals, small businesses, families who do not pay extortion, migrants, public officials, crime witnesses, and bystanders. Criminal groups continue to use guns to commit other crimes such as robbery, extortion, kidnapping, human trafficking, and forced disappearances.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) reported that from 2009-2014, over 70 percent of all firearms recovered and tracked at crime scenes in Mexico were purchased in the United States. Most of these weapons were purchased in the Border States of Texas, California, and Arizona.<sup>iv</sup> More broadly, the four southwestern Border States account for over 15 percent of the nation's licensed gun dealers and pawnbrokers, who operate out of various locations including gun shows. Yet, legal loopholes in three out of four states permit the sale of weapons at gun shows without a background check.<sup>v</sup> Such sales of firearms without a background check pose a threat not only to peaceful civilian life in America but also claim thousands of innocent Mexican lives every year.

For our nation to effectively respond to violence and organized crime in Mexico we believe the U.S. Border States should institute greater controls over southbound commercial activity to substantially reduce the illegal trafficking of firearms and ammunition into Mexico. Agencies charged with enforcing firearm laws should be provided effective mandates, funding, and leadership. Moreover, steps should be taken to ensure that persons suspected of trafficking guns to Mexico do not have access to firearms, especially semi-automatic assault weapons.

With the death toll in Mexico rising, Border States can take a leading role in assisting law enforcement in the fight against gun trafficking. We are ready to work with you to strengthen our gun transfer laws and make individuals on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border safer.

---

<sup>i</sup> Aridrajit Dube *et al.* (2013), "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico," *American Political Science Review*, at [http://odube.net/papers/Cross\\_border\\_spillover.pdf](http://odube.net/papers/Cross_border_spillover.pdf); Luke Chicoine (2011), *Exporting the Second Amendment: U.S. Assault Weapons and the Homicide Rate in Mexico*, University of Notre Dame, at <https://www.econ-jobs.com/research/32941-Exporting-the-Second-Amendment-US-Assault-Weapons-and-the-Homicide-Rate-in-Mexico.pdf>; David Pérez & Eugenio Weigend (2013), "Más armas, más delitos, más homicidios", *Nexos*, at <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=15496>.

<sup>ii</sup> The Mexican Secretariat of the Interior (2002), Crime Rate at the State Level. Available at <http://secretariadoejecutivo.gob.mx/docs/pdfs/estadisticas%20del%20fuero%20comun/2002.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> The Mexican Secretariat of the Interior (2016), Crime Rate at the State Level. Available at [http://secretariadoejecutivo.gob.mx/docs/pdfs/estadisticas%20del%20fuero%20comun/Cieisp2016\\_012017.pdf](http://secretariadoejecutivo.gob.mx/docs/pdfs/estadisticas%20del%20fuero%20comun/Cieisp2016_012017.pdf).

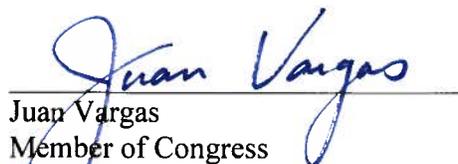
<sup>iv</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Requesters (2016), U.S. Efforts to Combat Firearms Trafficking to Mexico Have Improved, but Some Collaboration Challenges Remain, Available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/674570.pdf>.

<sup>v</sup> Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, Available at <http://smartgunlaws.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/investigating-gun-crimes/gun-trafficking-straw-purchases/>.

Sincerely,

  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

  
Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress

  
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



David Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



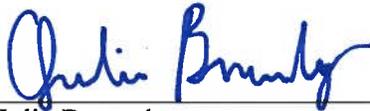
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



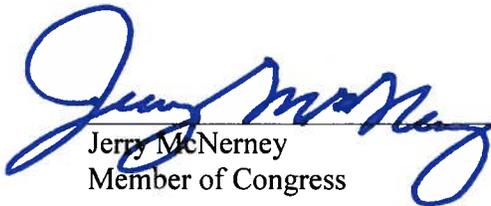
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



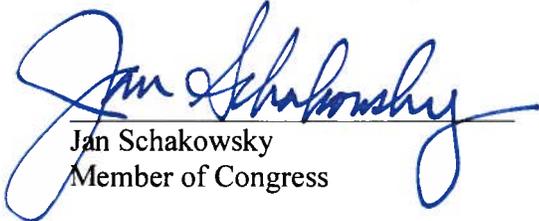
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress