

RICHARD J. DURBIN, ILLINOIS, CHAIR

PATRICK J. LEAHY, VERMONT
DIANNE FEINSTEIN, CALIFORNIA
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, RHODE ISLAND
AMY KLOBUCHAR, MINNESOTA
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
ALEX PADILLA, CALIFORNIA
JON OSSOFF, GEORGIA

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, IOWA
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS
MICHAEL S. LEE, UTAH
TED CRUZ, TEXAS
BEN SASSE, NEBRASKA
JOSHUA D. HAWLEY, MISSOURI
TOM COTTON, ARKANSAS
JOHN KENNEDY, LOUISIANA
THOM TILLIS, NORTH CAROLINA
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

December 14, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin:

Yesterday you held a hearing entitled, “Combating Gun Trafficking and Reducing Violence in Chicago” at the Everett McKinley Dirksen United States Courthouse in Chicago, Illinois.

As you know, reducing violent crime is a topic about which many members of the committee are deeply passionate. Beginning in the summer of 2020, the country has experienced a sustained and unprecedented 30% increase in murders.¹ This spike has correlated with a move toward depolicing,² after the eruption of over 500 riots nationally.³ Former Attorney General Bill Barr responded with Operation Legend, an initiative in which federal law enforcement agencies worked in conjunction with state and local law enforcement officials to fight violent crime. By the end of 2020, the initiative had yielded 467 homicide arrests and seized thousands of firearms and kilos of drugs.⁴

In June of 2021, the Biden Administration unveiled its own strategy to reduce violent crime.⁵ We were troubled to see how much of the President’s strategy focuses on lawful gun

¹ Zusha Elinson, *Murders Rose Nearly 30% in the U.S. in 2020*, *FBI Reports*, WSJ (Sept. 27, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/murders-rose-nearly-30-percent-in-the-u-s-in-2020-fbi-reports-11632769332>.

² Paul G. Cassell, *Explaining the Recent Homicide Spikes in U.S. Cities: The “Minneapolis Effect” and the Decline in Proactive Policing* (Sept. 10, 2020), at 27, available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3690473 (internal citations omitted).

³ Emma Colton, *Conservatives point out that Princeton study on protests reveals violence was found at hundreds of demonstrations*, WASH. EXAMINER (Sept. 6, 2020), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/conservatives-point-out-that-princeton-study-on-protests-reveals-violence-was-found-at-hundreds-of-demonstrations>.

⁴ Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, Attorney General William P. Barr Announces Results of Operation Legend (Dec. 23, 2020), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-william-p-barr-announces-results-operation-legend>.

⁵ Press Release, *Biden-Harris Administration Announces Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gun Crime and Ensure Public Safety* (June 23, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/23/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-comprehensive-strategy-to-prevent-and-respond-to-gun-crime-and-ensure-public-safety/>.

acquisition and lawful gun owners. For example, one of the tenets of the President's plan is finding ways to sue legal gun manufacturers, an initiative that would do much to interfere with Americans' access to guns but nothing to target murders or reduce crime. A 2019 study by DOJ found that few firearms used in crime are acquired from firearm dealers, about 7%, compared to 56% who stole a firearm or bought it in a black market.⁶ Legally owned firearms play an important role in allowing Americans to protect themselves during a violent crime surge. A 2013 CDC-commissioned study found that as many as millions of people a year defend themselves with a firearm.⁷

We understand that the hearing included witnesses who could answer questions about the President's plan and the challenges of countering this increase in crime. Although the hearing occurred in Chicago, the Chairman's hometown, travel to Chicago would have been difficult for the other members of the committee during the last few weeks of the work period. Accordingly, we previously requested that you make virtual or telephone questioning available. That request was denied.

We therefore request that you hold a full committee hearing in Washington, D.C. on the spike in murders and the challenges that law enforcement is facing. Ineffective bail policies, cumbersome restraints on police officers, and the impact of the "progressive prosecutor" movement are exacerbating this surge. While it would have been helpful to explore the effects of these factors on crime in Chicago, given the many other cities that are impacted by the crime surge, we believe it would be even more useful if we could explore these problems on a national scale with the full committee.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



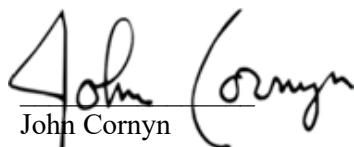
Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary




Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates*, 2016 (January 2019).


⁷ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, *Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence*, 15 (2013); *see also* Center for Disease Control, *Firearm Violence Prevention*, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>.




John Cornyn
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary




Michael S. Lee
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary




Ted Cruz
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary



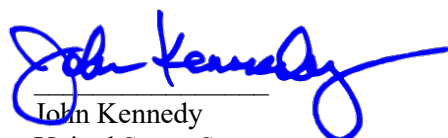
Ben Sasse
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary




Josh Hawley
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary




Tom Cotton
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary



John Kennedy
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary



Thom Tillis
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator
Committee on the Judiciary