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July 27, 2016

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

I write to you today in the wake of yet another tragic shooting, this time involving a gunman who shot and killed teenagers in Fort Meyers, Florida. Once again, the citizens of Florida are forced to try to make sense of the senseless, and this time just six short weeks after our State was the scene of the worst mass shooting in the history of the United States at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. However, perhaps more importantly – and certainly no less tragic – is the fact that our fellow Floridians will have to make sense out of the lack of leadership coming from you and other elected officials who have done nothing but continue to pander to the gun lobby in our State and around the country. This lack of leadership, this inability to come together and pass commonsense gun legislation, has led to a new normal in our State and in our country: unspeakable gun violence, followed by thoughts and prayers, followed by the inaction and obstructionism of the political Right, resulting only in the guaranteed continuation of more senseless gun violence to come.

It is with the full acknowledgement of this “new normal” that I must forthrightly state that the time for a staid and over-conciliatory discussion concerning the unending onslaught of gun violence afflicting our fellow citizens has passed. Frankly, our citizens continue to be killed and terrorized by gun violence at epidemic levels, and those who insist on standing in the way of commonsense gun violence prevention legislation are culpable in the continuation of this epidemic.

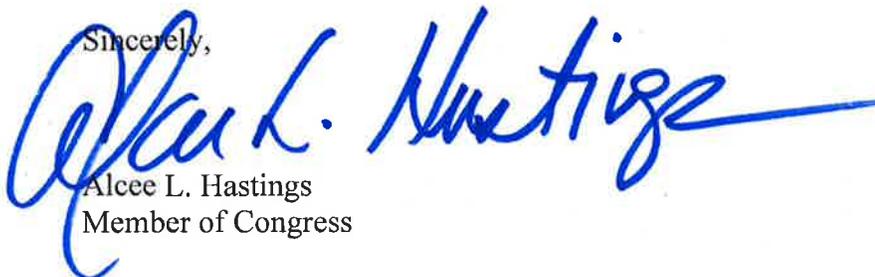
After 49 people were murdered at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando by a terrorist using a Sig Sauer MCX – a weapon originally designed for U.S. Special Forces – you stated that we should take a look at our gun laws – I could not agree more. You even made the salient point that “nobody would think that anybody on a terror watch list should have a gun...” Again, I fully agree. Unfortunately, directly following these sensible conclusions, you provided what can only be described as a tsunami of gun lobby talking points, leading one to question the sincerity of your earlier conclusions. Indeed, the weeks following the Orlando massacre have confirmed that your sensible conclusions concerning terrorists’ access to weapons of war were no match for the unyielding force the gun lobby holds over you and your fellow Republicans.

Your responsibility is to all Floridians, not just those whose overzealous accumulation of weapons threatens and undermines our safety, and certainly not to the gun lobby whose sole purpose is to protect and line the wallets of well-off gun manufactures in Florida and around the country. With this in mind, I encourage you to start at once in an effort to lead Florida into a time when commonsense gun legislation is not rejected out of hand, but rather honestly considered, debated and signed into law.

As it is today, Florida is one of 26 states to receive an “F” from the Brady Campaign when it comes to implementing commonsense gun legislation. Importantly, of those 26 states, Florida is not only the largest, but also the most densely populated. In other words, with its size, population density, number of firearms and lack of commonsense gun legislation, Florida has been, and remains, a powder keg for future gun violence. This does not have to be, and must not continue to be, the case. I encourage you to be a voice of reason for your party and for our State. I encourage you to champion background check legislation, limits on magazine capacity, and limits on assault rifles. In addition, I encourage you to fight for legislation that will ensure that those who are found guilty of committing acts of domestic violence no longer have access to guns, and that those with declared mental illnesses are likewise prohibited from acquiring firearms.

Governor, I do not pretend for a moment that you and I currently occupy common ground when it comes to enacting commonsense gun legislation – I know how powerful the gun lobby is in Florida. However, I cannot, and will not, sit idly by and watch Florida’s gun violence epidemic become our new normal. I sincerely hope that you will meditate on this epidemic and acknowledge that its cure is multifaceted and will require enacting commonsense gun legislation immediately.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress