



January 9, 2013

Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As members of Hindu American Foundation (HAF) joined their fellow Americans in mourning yet another horrific tragedy at the hands of gun violence, this time the theft of 26 beautiful and innocent lives from Newtown, CT, the cry for common sense dialog and action to curb America's gun violence epidemic could not have been louder. To this end, HAF is honored to have been asked to join senior Administration officials for this critical and much needed meeting.

Hindus affirm the inherent divinity of all beings and recognize that for the welfare of society, a balance is required between one's individual rights, such as the desire to own a gun, and one's responsibility to society, which may suffer as a result of gun violence. Hindu teachings also proffer the dual concept of *ahimsa* (non-harming) and *himsa* (harm or violence). While Hindus have the highest duty to practice *ahimsa* in their every thought, word, and action, Hindu scripture has also very clearly detailed realities which may necessitate *himsa*. Hindu scriptures and history are replete with examples of the individual sacrificing for the greater good and living up to the ideals of *ahimsa*. But they also describe the variety of life situations, faced moment to moment in human existence, in which the difficult choice must be made between a path that incurs harm, but supports an end of truth, righteousness, and justice, or a path that is not harmful, but allows falsehood, injustice, and evil to continue unabated.

In the wake of America's latest gun massacre and in the context of the wisdom offered by Hindu teachings for maintaining a just and peaceful society, HAF offers the following recommendations. These recommendations are not original by any means and have been proposed by a variety of advocates, elected leaders, and members of civil society. Still, HAF finds these to weigh the variety of competing interests fairly towards the end of reduced gun violence and increased gun safety.

1. Computerized ATF database of gun sales
2. Address loopholes in Tiahrt Amendments:
 - a. Lift limits on state and local law enforcement ability to use trace data in civil proceedings to suspend or revoke licenses of gun dealers violating laws

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- b. Abolish law requiring Justice Department to destroy records within 24 hours of buyers whose NICS background checks were approved
- c. Mandate annual physical inventory checks for gun dealers to track and account for any losses and thefts
3. Universal background checks, including stronger mental health background checks and criminal background checks for every gun sold (retail, online, trade show, etc.)
4. Federal “special need for self-protection” requirement for any license to carry a concealed weapon for greater uniformity across states (currently such requirement required in CA and NY)
5. Federal ban on assault rifles, high capacity magazines, and other weapons capable of inflicting widespread harm
6. Federal ban on any handguns, assault weapons, automatic weapon conversion kits, and weapons not detectable by traditionally used metal-detection devices;
7. Urge media and advertising and entertainment industries to curb promotion of gun violence
8. Urge Entertainment Software Rating Board to improve and further detail ratings as they pertain to gun violence, particularly mass gun violence, and violence in general
9. Increase federal funding for research on guns, gun violence, etc.
10. Promote civic, faith-based, and school-based awareness programs or awareness weeks encouraging social gatherings, outreach, volunteer opportunities, and involvement to increase social ties and community.

HAF looks forward to continuing to work with Vice President Biden and members of the Administration in identifying and analyzing concrete proposals for real reform.

Respectfully,
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