

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman  
Seante Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H307 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro and Vice Chair Collins,

As you work to finalize the FY25 Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Appropriations package, we respectfully request that you include an increase of funding to \$2 billion, or to the greatest amount executable, for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) within the Department of Justice (DOJ). Such an increase would support the Agency's critical work in preventing and responding to gun crime and ensuring the safe manufacture, importation, and sale of firearms.

Gun violence is a scourge that impacts American families every day, and is exacerbated by the illegal trafficking of firearms. In 2022, over 48 thousand Americans died from gun violence, including over 2500 children and teens. That year, gun deaths accounted for 30% of all deaths among youth aged 15-17.<sup>1</sup> Provisional data for 2023 indicates that there are nearly 75 suicides by firearm per day.<sup>2</sup> Firearm deaths are preventable, and one significant way to prevent gun deaths is to invest in the work of ATF to trace crime guns. Between 2017 and 2021, ATF reports, more than 68 thousand firearms were trafficked by unlicensed dealers within the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The ATF's work is critical to protecting Americans from the scourge of gun violence and the influx of unsafe guns into our communities. In particular, we recommend robust funding to address the following initiatives.

## **Illegal Firearms Trafficking**

We urge you to provide robust funding for efforts to prevent the illegal trafficking of firearms. To target illegal trafficking, we recommend full funding for Firearms Trafficking Strike Forces, which aid collaboration between

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1 Villarreal, S., Kim, R., Wagner, E., Somayaji, N., Davis, A., & Crifasi, C. K. (2024). Gun Violence in the United States 2022: Examining the Burden Among Children and Teens. Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, August 19). *Firearm suicide trends*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/php/data-trends/firearm-suicide-data-trends.html>

3 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment Volume III Part V: Type and Volume of Firearms Trafficked (2024). Retrieved November 1, 2024, from <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-v/download>.

the ATF and state and local police where guns are illegally traded and used for crime, and Industry Operations Investigators (IOIs), who ensure that Federally Licensed Firearms Dealers are following applicable federal law and regulation. The robust enforcement of gun sales laws is critical to ensuring that firearms do not fall into illegal trafficking and become crime guns. Despite playing a critical role in ensuring safer gun sales, the IOI workforce has remained relatively constant over the last fifty years. In 1973, the ATF employed 826 IOIs, while in 2022, it employed 862.<sup>4</sup> The Biden Administration has requested funding to hire 249 additional IOIs. We ask that you fulfill this request.

### **Ghost Guns and Other Emerging Threats**

We recommend providing robust funding to address the emerging threat of untraceable and privately manufactured firearms and machine gun conversion devices. Ghost guns are firearms sold in the form of weapons parts kits or as separate pieces that are put together by the end user. These guns are sold this way because they do not have a serial number, making them untraceable and more easily used in crime. Between 2016 and 2021, law enforcement reported over 45 thousand reports of suspected privately made firearms to the ATF, including 692 in association with homicide or attempted homicides.<sup>5</sup> Machine gun conversion devices take a variety of structures, but fundamentally shift the use of a legal firearm by making it function like a machine gun. While new machine guns are illegal for civilian use under the Firearm Owners Protections Act of 1986, these conversion devices may be 3D printed and thus untraceable. The ATF needs additional resources to meet the emerging threat of privately created guns and machine gun conversion devices.

### **Gun Tracing**

Tracking guns across jurisdictions is critical to finding and retrieving crime guns. The ATF is responsible for this work through the National Tracing Center (NTC), which provides tracing information to federal, state, and local law enforcement nationwide. In recent years, the NTC has seen an increase in the number of tracing requests. In FY 2024, the NTC received over 680 thousand tracing requests, which will represent a 5.4% increase as compared to FY 2023.<sup>6</sup> In this year's appropriations bill, we recommend providing additional funding to the modernization efforts of the NTC to support eTrace, a web portal that allows all levels of law enforcement to track guns in their communities.<sup>7</sup>

### **An Updated Analysis of Trafficking Investigations**

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<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (2014, May). *Fact Sheet - ATF Staffing and Budget*. Fact Sheet. <https://www.atf.gov/file/11081/download>; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (2024, July 1). *Fact Sheet - Facts and Figures for Fiscal Year 2023*. <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-facts-and-figures-fiscal-year-2023>

<sup>5</sup> Office of Public Affairs. (2022, April 11). *Justice Department announces new rule to modernize firearm definitions*. Office of Public Affairs - U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-new-rule-modernize-firearm-definitions>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice, Fiscal Year 2025 Performance Budget Congressional Submission Salaries and Expenses February 2024 (2024). Retrieved November 1, 2024, from [https://www.justice.gov/d9/2024-03/atf\\_fy\\_2025\\_pb\\_narrative\\_final\\_3-6-2024\\_1.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/d9/2024-03/atf_fy_2025_pb_narrative_final_3-6-2024_1.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (2024, April). *Fact Sheet - eTrace: Internet-Based Firearms Tracing and Analysis*. Resource Center. <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-etrace-internet-based-firearms-tracing-and-analysis>

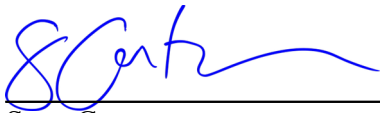
In April 2024, ATF published the third volume of a four-volume report on gun trafficking and the diversion of guns into illegal markets over the period between CY 2017 and 2021. This report is the first of its kind in the last 20 years. While this is an important step towards filling the longstanding gaps in data collection on and understanding of gun trafficking, more funding is needed to ensure this study is not a one-off and is followed by others in the future. We urge you to include specific funding for the promulgation of additional reports on trafficking moving forward.

**National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)**

The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) is a database of ballistic imaging ATF runs which can be used by law enforcement to match cartridge casings found at crime scenes and test fire recovered guns, helping to identify perpetrators of violent crime.<sup>8</sup> This database currently stores 6.5 million pieces of evidence and generated over 221 thousand leads for law enforcement in FY 2023.<sup>9</sup> We urge you to provide robust funding for the NIBIN and other intelligence capabilities within ATF.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for full funding for the ATF. We look forward to working with you to reduce gun violence across the country.


Sincerely,



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



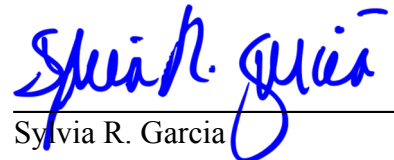
Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



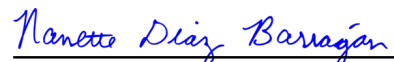
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

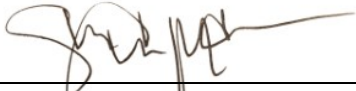


Nanette Diaz Barragan  
Member of Congress

<sup>8</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (n.d.). *National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)*. Tools & Services for Law Enforcement. <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/national-integrated-ballistic-information-network-nibin>;

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (2024b, July). *Fact Sheet - National Integrated Ballistic Information Network*. Resource Center. <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-integrated-ballistic-information-network>

<sup>9</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (2024b, July). *Fact Sheet - National Integrated Ballistic Information Network*. Resource Center. <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-integrated-ballistic-information-network>



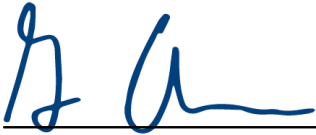
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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress



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Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



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Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



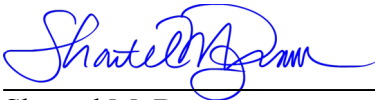
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



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Shontel M. Brown  
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Katie Porter  
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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



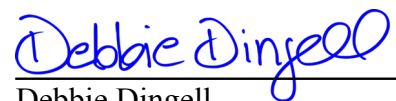
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Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



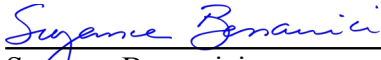
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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



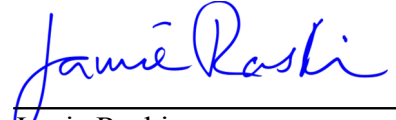
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Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



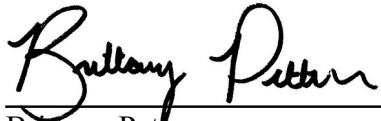
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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



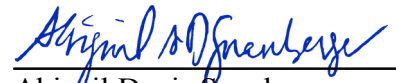
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



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Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress



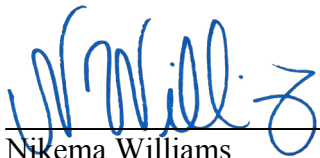
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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



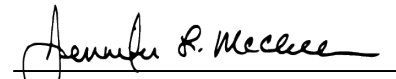
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Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress




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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



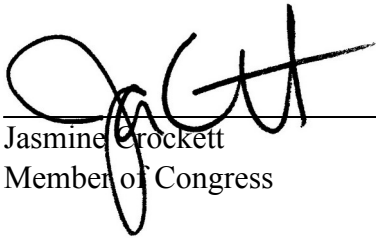
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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



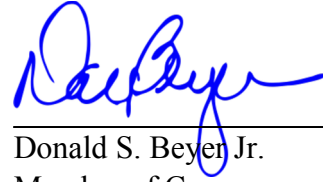
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



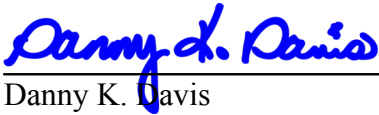
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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



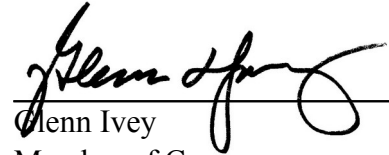
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



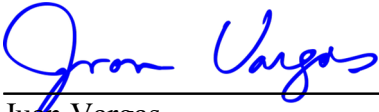
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



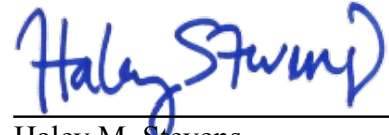
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Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



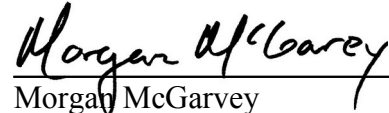
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Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



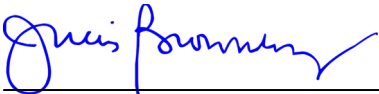
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Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



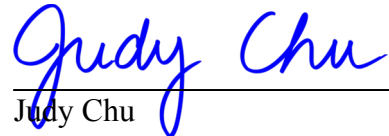
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Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress



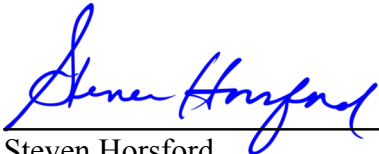
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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



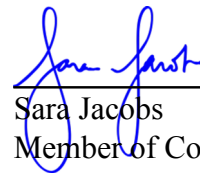
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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



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Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



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Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress



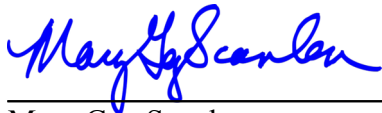
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Jim Tokuda  
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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



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Mary Gay Scanlon  
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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



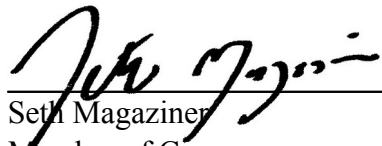
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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



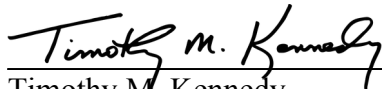
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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



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Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress