

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2013

Jeffrey Zients
Acting Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Zients,

We write to you today strongly urging you to ensure that the appropriations riders commonly referred to as the “Tiahrt Amendments” are not included in President Obama’s FY 2014 budget. For nearly a decade, these harmful restrictions have hindered law enforcement’s ability to enforce existing gun laws, preventing law enforcement and public officials from cracking down on gun trafficking and gathering critical information in ongoing criminal investigations where illegal guns are used.

As you know, the Tiahrt Amendments are policy riders that have been attached to the annual Commerce Justice Science and Related Agencies appropriations bills for the last nine years – without a floor vote or full debate. These riders prohibit the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from requiring licensed gun dealers to perform inventory checks, require background check records be destroyed within 24 hours, and limit state and local law enforcement authorities’ access and use of ATF gun trace data, a vitally important tool in combating illegal gun trafficking. Law enforcement has been struggling for years to fight crime and illegal gun trafficking without these essential enforcement tools in their arsenal, resulting in a terrifying increase of illegal gun sales and gun violence in our nation.

The ATF estimates that the majority of crime guns come from less than two percent of licensed dealers, but local and state law enforcement is currently restricted from using gun trace data to revoke the licenses of those who break the law. Even worse, requiring the destruction of background check records within 24 hours makes it nearly impossible for the ATF to catch rogue gun dealers who falsify their records or straw purchasers who buy guns on behalf of criminals. By prohibiting the ATF from requiring dealers to complete inventory checks for lost and stolen weapons, the ATF is forced to rely solely on its own limited resources, resulting in less than 20 percent of the nation’s gun dealers being inspected annually.

As our nation continues to grapple with the recent tragedies in places like Newtown, Aurora, Tucson, Oak Creek, and other heartbreaks, we must ensure that our law enforcement personnel are given all the tools necessary to do their jobs. These limitations have already had devastating effects on several investigations over the past few years. During Congressional investigations into “Operation Fast and Furious”, Chairman Darrell Issa and Senator Chuck Grassley had to

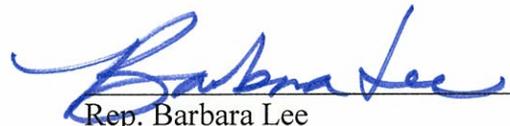
take the extreme step of requesting gun trace data of the Mexican Ambassador since they weren't allowed do so with their own government. Similarly, in March 2009 the California Department of Justice complained to ATF that the Tiahrt Amendments were preventing them from obtaining data related to guns that had been trafficked from California to Mexico. While recent changes in the Amendments have allowed limited access to trace data for law enforcement, Congress and other policy makers still do not have even this access.

Allowing the ATF to conduct routine enforcement measures and giving law enforcement full access to gun trace data are essential in targeting illegal gun traffickers. Restoring law enforcement's ability to enforce current gun laws will prevent further gun violence within our country and along its borders. States like Texas and California continue to face major obstacles in containing the bloodshed occurring from the use of illegal guns that are flowing across their borders. The issue of illegal guns is not an issue of conservative or liberal ideology; it is an issue of law and order – and life or death. This is why we urge you to omit the Tiahrt Amendments from the President's FY 2014 budget.

Sincerely,



Rep. Mike Honda



Rep. Barbara Lee



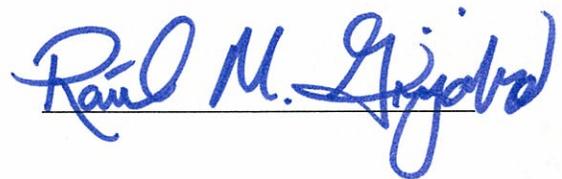
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