

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 18, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson,

We write to you with an urgent and unequivocal call to action. Like you, we believe the disgraceful act of political violence that occurred at a recent Donald Trump campaign rally has no place in this country and should be unanimously and forcefully condemned.¹ Political violence like the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump with an AR-15 assault rifle will continue unless we curb the means of political violence.² The House of Representatives must take decisive and resolute action to bring H.R. 698, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2023 and H.R. 8600, the Gas-Operated Semi-Automatic Firearms Exclusion (GOSAFE) Act to a vote.

We recognize the importance of the President's messages of unity,³ and the House of Representatives must do its part. Messages alone will not stop the next assailant. An assault weapons ban, or gas-operated weapons ban could have helped prevent the attack that cost an American his life. As elected representatives, we have the chance to bring H.R. 689 introduced by Representative Lucy McBath to the House floor for a vote. This critical piece of legislation seeks to reinstate the prohibition on assault weapons, a measure proven to save lives. We also have the chance to bring H.R. 8600 to the floor for a vote. This piece of legislation will prohibit gas-operated firearms such as the firearm used in this past weekend. The evidence irrefutably shows that during the period when the federal assault weapons ban was in place, mass shootings decreased significantly.⁴ Since its expiration in 2004, the data shows an almost immediate – and steep – rise in mass shooting deaths in the years after the assault weapons ban.⁵

¹ Greg Hilburn, *Louisiana Speaker Mike Johnson, Governor Jeff Landry React to Shooting at Trump Rally*, THE SHREVEPORT TIMES, Jul. 13, 2024, www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/2024/07/13/louisiana-speaker-mike-johnson-and-governor-jeff-landry-react-to-trump-assassination-attempt/74396724007/.

² Terry Gross, *Why the Weapon of Choice Matters in the Trump Assassination Attempt*, NPR, Jul. 15, 2024, www.npr.org/2024/07/15/g-s1-10410/why-the-weapon-of-choice-matters-in-the-trump-assassination-attempt.

³ Elizabeth Both, *Biden Calls for Unity after Trump Assassination Attempt and "90210" Star Shannen Doherty Remembered: Morning Rundown*, NBC NEWS (2024), www.nbcnews.com/news/biden-calls-unity-trump-assassination-attempt-90210-star-shannen-doherty-rcna161830.

⁴ Charles DiMaggio et al., *Changes in US Mass Shooting Deaths Associated with the 1994–2004 Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Analysis of Open-Source Data*, 86 JOURNAL OF TRAUMA AND ACUTE CARE SURGERY 11 (2019), https://journals.lww.com/jtrauma/Abstract/2019/01000/Changes_in_US_mass_shooting_deaths_associated_with.2.aspx.

⁵ Michael J. Klein, *Did the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994 Bring down Mass Shootings? Here's What the Data Tells Us*, OHIO CAPITAL JOURNAL, Jun. 15, 2022, <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2022/06/15/did-the-assault-weapons-ban-of-1994-bring-down-mass-shootings-heres-what-the-data-tells-us/>.

What we saw on July 14, 2024, is that the need to act against political violence is not a partisan issue, it is a matter of public safety and common sense. It should not take the attempted assassination of a former President for the Speaker of the House to act. A failure to respond in the face of a brazen, attack almost certainly invites a future tragedy.

Time and time again, assault weapons have been the weapon of choice for those perpetrating political violence. In the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting, 49 people were killed and 53 others were injured;⁶ in the 2017 Congressional Baseball Game Shooting, now Majority Leader Steve Scalise was shot and three others injured;⁷ in the 2018 Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting, 11 people were killed and 6 injured;⁸ in the 2019 El Paso Walmart and Dayton Shootings, 32 total people were killed and 40 more were injured;⁹ in the 2022 Buffalo and Uvalde Shootings, 29 people were killed, including 19 children.¹⁰ Now there has been an attempt on the life of a presidential candidate, which led to at least one other death.¹¹

The assault weapons used in these attacks were designed for war and enable a lone attacker to inflict mass casualties in mere moments. These assault weapons have no place on our streets. The American people overwhelmingly support the reinstatement of the assault weapons ban. A recent survey found that a significant majority of Americans, including gun owners, favor such legislation.¹² The time for thoughts and prayers has long passed; now is the time for action.

We urge you, Speaker Johnson, to demonstrate true leadership and moral courage by bringing H.R. 698, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2023 and H.R. 8600, the GOSAFE Act to the floor for an immediate vote. The lives of countless Americans depend on our ability to act decisively and responsibly. The legacy of

⁶ Ryan Gillespie, *8 Years Later, Orlando Remembers 49 Victims of Pulse Mass Shooting*, ORLANDO SENTINEL, Jun. 13, 2024, www.orlandosentinel.com/2024/06/12/8-years-later-orlando-remembers-49-victims-of-pulse-mass-shooting/.

⁷ Michael D. Shear, Adam Goldman & Emily Cochrane, *Congressman Steve Scalise Gravely Wounded in Alexandria Baseball Field Ambush*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Jun. 14, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/06/14/us/steve-scalise-congress-shot-alexandria-virginia.html.

⁸ Megan Guza, *Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff to Speak at Memorial Groundbreaking for Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting Victims*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, Jun. 17, 2024, www.post-gazette.com/news/faith-religion/2024/06/17/doug-emhoff-tree-of-life-synagogue-memorial/stories/202406170040.

⁹ Office of Public Affairs, *Office of Public Affairs | Texas Man Sentenced to 90 Consecutive Life Sentences for 2019 Mass Shooting at Walmart in El Paso, Texas, Killing 23 People and Injuring 22 Others | United States Department of Justice*, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (2023), www.justice.gov/opa/pr/texas-man-sentenced-90-consecutive-life-sentences-2019-mass-shooting-walmart-el-paso-texas; Emily Shapiro, *26 Shot in 32 Seconds: New Details, Videos Released in Dayton Mass Shooting*, ABC NEWS (2019), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/26-shot-32-seconds-details-videos-released-dayton/story?id=64953910>.

¹⁰ Hurubie Meko & Dan Higgins, *Buffalo Gunman Pleads Guilty in Racist Attack That Left 10 Dead*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Nov. 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/28/nyregion/buffalo-shooting-guilty-plea.html>; Alejandro Serrano, *“Somber Day” in Uvalde as Community Commemorates One Year since Robb Elementary Shooting*, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE, May 24, 2023, www.texastribune.org/2023/05/24/uvalde-robb-elementary-shooting-anniversary/.

¹¹ Zoe Sottile, Kit Maher & Lauren Mascarenhas, *Corey Comperatore: Man Killed at Trump Rally in Pennsylvania a Firefighter Who ‘Died a Hero,’* CNN, Jul. 15, 2024, www.cnn.com/2024/07/14/politics/corey-comperatore-trump-shooting-victim/index.html.

¹² Katherine Schaeffer, *Key Facts about Americans and Guns*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2023), www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/13/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/; Jeffrey Jones, *Majority in U.S. Continues to Favor Stricter Gun Laws*, GALLUP.COM (2023), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/513623/majority-continues-favor-stricter-gun-laws.aspx>.

this Congress must be one of action and compassion, not one of continued inaction and preventable tragedy. Safety considerations should not be hindered by political ideology. We care for every American's safety, and we need to take action now.

Every day that we delay, more lives are put at risk. The trauma inflicted by mass shootings reverberates through families and communities, leaving scars that last a lifetime. We owe it to the victims, the survivors, and the future generations to enact sensible gun legislation that will help end this cycle of violence. Together, we can take a significant step toward ending the scourge of gun violence in our nation and ensuring a safer future for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maxwell Alejandro Frost". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maxwell" being the most prominent.

Rep. Maxwell Frost
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucy McBath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lucy" being the most prominent.

Rep. Lucy McBath
Member of Congress