

David M. Kennedy
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The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
By email -

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
By email - senator@mcconnell.senate.gov

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

I am writing in strong support of the nomination of David Chipman to serve as Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).

I have known and worked closely with David since the mid-1990s, when our paths crossed as part of the work of the Boston Gun Project, a DOJ-funded effort to address youth homicide and gun violence at the peak of the national crack epidemic. I was then working out of the Program for Criminal Justice Policy and Management at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. That work produced two fundamentally new lines of thinking and action around gun violence. One was the approach now known as “focused deterrence,” which has emerged as the leading evidence-based intervention around community violence (Senator McConnell, this is the strategy we are bringing to Louisville under the leadership of Russell Coleman, whom I know you know well). The other was a new understanding and focus on illegal firearms trafficking and diversion, which for the first time identified clear pathways by which guns were being moved from the legal market into illicit markets and the hands of violent criminals, and identified clear law enforcement opportunities to address those pathways without compromising legal gun ownership. That work was picked up by the Department of the Treasury, which then housed ATF, and David was a core part of the team that built the national Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to address this critical issue (Senator Schumer, I worked closely with staff in your office as this new information emerged, and your recognition of and advocacy around the issue was extremely important to that process).

David's commitment to and work in launching YCGII was frankly heroic, as have been the other parts of his extraordinary career in countering foreign and domestic terrorism, racial violence, organized firearms trafficking, playing key strategic and executive roles at ATF, and since leaving government service continuing to do public service with some of the most important organizations supporting law enforcement and public policy around gun violence. He has literally dedicated his life to public safety and taken personal responsibility for making sure the public has it, from the street level of face-to-face individual incidents to the highest levels of institutional development, policy, and strategy. I cannot think of anyone better qualified and suited to lead ATF, and I urge you to support his confirmation as director.

Sincerely,

David M. Kennedy