

600 Grant Street, Suite 750
Denver, CO 80203
303-839-1852 ofc
303-831-9251 fax



1140 3rd St. NE, 2nd floor
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-714-7662 ofc

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

May 6, 2022

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Committee Members:

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) writes to urge the Senate to confirm Steve Dettelbach (Dettelbach) to be the Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) at the Department of Justice. NCADV is the nation's oldest national grassroots domestic violence organization, representing domestic violence programs and survivors directly. Established in 1978, our mission is to lead, mobilize, and raise our voices to support efforts that demand a change of conditions that lead to domestic violence such as patriarchy, privilege, racism, sexism, and classism. We are dedicated to supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable and supporting advocates.

Armed abusers pose a lethal danger to their victims, their families, and their communities. Most homicides of women are committed by intimate partners, and most of these are committed using firearms.¹ A male abuser's access to a firearm increases the risk of intimate partner femicide by 1,000%.² Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, while intimate partner homicides committed by means other than firearms continued a long downward trend, intimate partner homicides committed with firearms were increasing, leading to an overall increase in the rate of intimate partner homicides.³ The pandemic exacerbated this trend, leading to a massive spike in both intimate partner homicides and intimate partner homicides using firearms. For example, in the twelve months between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 intimate partner homicides in Indiana increased 181% over the previous twelve-month period, with the percentage of homicides committed using firearms rising from 67% to 98%.⁴ Moreover, 20% of the victims of intimate partner homicides are someone other than the abuse victim,⁵ including children, law enforcement, and community members, and almost 60% of mass shootings are related to intimate partner violence.⁶

Abusers also regularly use firearms as tools with which to exert power and coercive control. A study of contacts by the National Domestic Violence Hotline found that, of respondents whose abusers had access to a firearm, 10% said the abuser had fired that firearm during a domestic violence incident, and 67% believed their abusers were capable of killing them.⁷

Federal law restricts firearm access by certain adjudicated abusers.⁸ The ATF has a limited role in enforcing these restrictions, primarily by intervening in situations in which an abuser is in violation of federal law and poses a substantial danger to his community that is beyond the capacity of local law enforcement to address. The recently-passed Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 reinforces the ATF's role in addressing these cases by requiring the ATF to establish domestic violence points of contact in every Field Office to

respond to requests by state, Tribal, and local law enforcement for assistance in responding to or investigating these cases.⁹

The ATF needs a strong, confirmed director to bring its operations into the 21st century and ensure it carries out its mission; the ATF needs Steve Dettelbach at its head. Dettelbach is a highly respected career prosecutor who has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to upholding the rule of law. Dettelbach is levelheaded, and he approaches his position as a public servant with both steady strength and Midwestern humility. He makes decisions based on data, within the confines of the law, not based on ideology.

Dettelbach is a coalition builder. He has a very clear understanding of the role of the ATF as an agency that partners with and supports local law enforcement, including law enforcement not only in urban areas but also in suburban, rural, and frontier communities. As a federal prosecutor, he worked closely with local law enforcement, prosecutors, community members, and judges to develop and implement creative strategies to improve community safety and fight violent crime. He has a demonstrated ability to build partnership and trust with law enforcement agencies and with communities. This includes an ability to build relationships with vulnerable survivors of domestic violence whose cases he prosecuted and with the organizations that serve these survivors.

Dettelbach is a consensus choice to lead the ATF. He was confirmed unanimously to be the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio in 2009. He has earned the support of stakeholders across the ideological spectrum, including more than 140 former Justice Department officials from both Republican and Democratic administrations, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the American Pediatric Surgical Association, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and the Major County Sheriffs of America.

NCADV joins these and many other stakeholders in urging the Senate to swiftly confirm Dettelbach to lead the ATF.

Sincerely,

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

¹ Violence Policy Center. (2021). *When men murder women: An analysis of 2019 homicide data*. <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2021.pdf>

² Spencer, C. M. & Stith, S. M. (2020). Risk factors for male perpetration and female victimization of intimate partner homicide: A meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 21*(3), 527-540. doi: 10.1177/1524838018781101

³ Fridel, E. E. & Fox, J. A. (2019). Gender differences in patterns and trends in U.S. homicide, 1976-2017. *Violence and Gender, 6*(1), 27-36. doi: 10.1089/vio.2019.0005

600 Grant Street, Suite 750
Denver, CO 80203
303-839-1852 **ofc**
303-831-9251 **fax**



1140 3rd St. NE, 2nd floor
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-714-7662 **ofc**

⁴ Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2021). *Domestic violence fatalities: July 1, 2020 – June 20, 2021*. <https://icadvinc.org/domestic-violence-fatalities-2020-21/>

⁵ Smith, S., Fowler, K. & Niolon, P. (2014). Intimate partner homicide and corollary victims in 16 states: National violent death reporting system, 2003-2009. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(3), 461-466. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301582>

⁶ Geller, L. B., Booty, M., & Crifasi, C. K. (2021). The role of domestic violence in fatal mass shootings in the United States, 2014-2019. *Injury Epidemiology, 8*(38). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-021-00330-0>

⁷ National Domestic Violence Hotline (2014). *Firearms and domestic violence*. <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/firearms-dv/#tab-id-2>

⁸ 18 U.S.C. 922(g)(1), (8), & (9)

⁹ Title 11 of Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 (Division W of Public Law No: 117-103; 136 Stat. 49)