



February 23, 2018

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of NFTY – The Reform Jewish Youth Movement, which mobilizes more than 8,000 young Reform leaders; the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass more than 1.5 million Reform Jews; and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose membership includes more than 2,000 Reform rabbis, we are writing to urge you to take immediate action to stop the scourge of gun violence in America.

We are heartbroken by the tragic news from Parkland, Florida. A former student, armed with a weapon similar to those used in war zones, transformed a place of learning and community into a place of death and destruction. Our hearts ache for the victims, their loved ones, and the entire Parkland community.

Over the last six months, our nation has witnessed three of the deadliest mass shootings in modern American history. The massacre in Parkland is the 18th school shooting and the 34th mass shooting in our country so far this year. Until our elected officials stop issuing empty calls for thoughts and prayers and start protecting all Americans, we are left to wonder which community will be the next one added to this dreadful list. No other country in the world tolerates this level of deadly slaughter. Enough is enough.

The recent tragic news is devastating, but it is not surprising. Too many students and teachers, concertgoers, community members, and people of faith in houses of worship across the country have been brutally murdered like the students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Every day, guns kill 93 Americans and injure 200 more. These tragedies are alarmingly frequent, yet preventable.

We implore you to move far beyond empty calls for thoughts and prayers and take urgent action. Leviticus 19:16 instructs us, “Do not stand idly by while your neighbor’s blood is shed.” We strongly believe in the power of prayer, and yet, we know that prayer is a call to action rather than a substitute for it.

As Reform Jews, we are called to speak out against violence and advocate for common-sense solutions to stop these massacres. Accepting this charge, and with leadership from teens in Parkland and NFTY teen leaders across America, we urge Congress to take the following actions:

- **Banning the purchase and sale of assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines.**
- **Establishing universal background checks, closing the private sale loophole, and strengthening the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.**
- **Opposing expanded concealed carry reciprocity legislation, which would allow anyone with a concealed carry permit in one state to carry a concealed weapon in all states.**
- **Repealing the Dickey Amendment and restoring funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for research on gun violence.**



- **Enacting a gun violence restraining order law, which would temporarily prohibit an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms when deemed by a judge to pose a danger to self or others.**
- **Closing the Charleston loophole, which permits federally licensed dealers to sell guns to purchasers if three business days pass without a positive verdict on their background check from the FBI.**
- **Opposing legislative efforts to deregulate the purchase and sale of gun silencers.**
- **Closing the boyfriend loophole, which allows convicted abusers and stalkers to buy and own firearms.**

All people in our country deserve to feel safe in their communities. Inaction is immoral and wrong. The message that we deliver today is urgent – lives are on the line and there is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner
Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Zachary Herrmann
President, NFTY – The Reform Jewish Youth Movement