



To: Secretary of HHS Alex Azar
Attorney General Jeff Sessions
Secretary of Defense James Mattis
Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos

From: Members of America's Cabinet

Re: President Trump's Cabinet is failing to protect Americans from gun violence

Friday, February 16, 2018

Members of President Trump's Cabinet,

Among your many responsibilities as members of the President's Cabinet, the most important is the obligation to protect Americans' safety and security. Your failure to do so had deadly consequences this week, when a school shooting in Florida took the lives of 17 students and teachers who have now become victims – like so many others in this country – of America's gun violence epidemic.

We who serve on [America's Cabinet](#) – a group of young elected officials from across the country who came together to offer an alternative vision for the nation – call for immediate, substantive reform to America's gun safety policies and practices in order to protect Americans from tragedies like yesterday's school shooting. **'Thoughts and prayers' aren't enough; we need action.**

As members of President Trump's Cabinet, you wield significant power and authority to address the problem of gun violence in America. Now, in the wake of yet another deadly mass shooting, it's time for you to do so.

Secretary Azar, as head of the Department of Health and Human Services, it's time you take immediate steps to remedy this public health crisis, including allowing HHS to study gun violence trends that can inform best practices in gun safety; empowering clinicians to discuss gun violence with their patients as a public health issue; and reinstating regulations that President Trump previously [revoked](#) preventing those with certain mental illnesses from accessing guns.

Secretary Nielsen, the Department of Homeland Security was created to protect Americans in the wake of the worst international terrorist attack in the nation's history. But since then, it has failed to protect us from the domestic threat of gun violence. To combat this threat, DHS must prevent those listed on the no-fly list from accessing guns; build bridges with communities to identify warning signs for potential domestic terrorism incidents; and act faster to intervene when individuals, like the school shooter in Florida, demonstrate a propensity for violence.

Attorney General Sessions, you've said recently that every gun violence victim has a "[right to life](#)" and that we must "[do something](#)" to stop mass shootings like the one in Florida. Back your words up with action. To start, you should back '[red flag](#)' rules that allow law enforcement to intervene when an individual shows warning signs for gun violence, as the perpetrator of this week's shooting in Florida did. The Justice Department must also aggressively pursue and enforce cases involving gun violence.

Secretary DeVos, your recent [calls](#) for Congress to hold hearings on school shootings was an important first step. Arming teachers – as some have suggested – isn't the answer; we must pass comprehensive gun safety legislation. But if Congress won't act, the Department of Education must take immediate steps to protect students and teachers from school shootings, including conducting a comprehensive review on how we can guarantee the safety and security of our schools. Children shouldn't have to fear for their lives when they go to school.



Secretary Mattis, the Department of Defense is made up of service members who have all too often seen the horrors of gun violence firsthand. To curb this epidemic, the Defense Department should partner with gun manufacturers to develop and deploy life-saving smart gun technology by providing incentives offering access to military facilities designed to test the effectiveness of smart guns. These efforts have been [successful](#) in the past, and we should be doubling down to ensure that they continue to be in the future.

In addition to the immediate, meaningful gun safety legislation that is long overdue at the federal level, we need a multi-agency approach that leaves no stone unturned in our efforts to find sustainable, long-lasting solutions to America's gun violence epidemic. From mental health to facility security and from government to procurement to popular education, there is so much we can – and must – do to protect our nation's children.

The time to act is now. America's Cabinet calls on Congress to join the vast [majority](#) of Americans in supporting – and passing into law – universal background checks; stricter controls on access to guns by violent felons and the mentally ill; greater enforcement around cases of gun violence; and bans on deadly weapons and accessories like assault rifles, bump stocks and high-capacity magazines.

In the absence of any such leadership from Congress, however, we rely on you – the members of President Trump's Cabinet – to step up and take immediate steps to save American lives. As 17 families prepare to bury their loved ones in the wake of this week's horrific school shooting in Florida, now is the time to throw the full and considerable resources of each of your departments behind curbing and ultimately solving the crisis of gun violence in America.

Sincerely,

Dominick Moreno, Colorado State Senator
Secretary of HHS, America's Cabinet

Ilhan Omar, Minnesota State Representative
Secretary of Homeland Security, America's Cabinet

Jane Kim, San Francisco, CA Board Supervisor
Attorney General, America's Cabinet

Paula Phillips, Milwaukee, WI School Board Director
Secretary of Education, America's Cabinet

Daniel Riemer, Wisconsin State Representative
Secretary of Defense, America's Cabinet