

Letter to Governor Sununu urging Support and Signing of Gun Violence Prevention Bills

On July 2nd, Bishop Hirschfeld sent the following letter to Governor Chris Sununu:

Office of the Governor

State House

107 North Main Street

Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu:

I realize that writing you to encourage your signing into law the gun violence prevention bills currently on your desk — legislation that you have already proclaimed pure politics — is probably in vain. However, just as you may feel called by your party to veto a bill calling for legislation that I believe will reduce gun violence in this and our neighboring states, I also feel called to speak out of my faith in a God who has chosen non-violence and to hope and pray for a change of heart and mind when it comes to gun safety.

We need greater scrutiny when it comes to the sale of guns to persons who struggle with emotional instability and mental illness. We need greater scrutiny for the transfer of ownership for guns in gun-show parking lots and family homes. Nepotism in government, business, or religion does not benefit the broader community. Neither does nepotism in the sale and ownership of weapons designed to kill human beings. I believe the legislation before you both upholds our constitution and applies a healthy dose of common sense to public safety and the public good.

Furthermore, and since I am being so bold as to ask you to sign HB 109, HB 514, and HB 564 into law, I respectfully request that you use your own clear voice and considerable influence to call upon the NRA to return to its original mission as an organization that fosters gun safety. The NRA has become a lobbyist for the firearms industry — an industry that profits immensely by saturating our neighborhoods with weapons. Our schools, state houses, and even our houses of worship, are threatened to be turned into armed camps.

One further observation: one cannot ignore the more prevalent public display of weapons, either by bearing arms openly or by provocatively displaying one's pride in gun-ownership with symbols of weapons. As a result, it is deeply troubling that New Hampshire increasingly is a place that actually inhibits free speech, free exercise of religion, and free right of assembly. More and more people feel unsafe expressing themselves in public — not due to the presence of "bad guys with guns" but due to the bellicose rhetoric and behavior of those, though surely law-abiding citizens, who are convinced gun ownership is more a duty, an honored sign of patriotism, than a right.

Any attempt to moderate or curb our nation's glorification and worship of weapons is met with abusive rhetoric, threats, and outright hatred — demonstrating that our society is indeed in the grip of idolatry.

As governor and as a bishop, you and I cannot on our own fully stem the coarseness and harshness of our age. But we can take steps, in our rhetoric, in our governance, in our public speaking, and in our advocacy to stand for those practices and policies that further the civic health and welfare of our community. Common sense gun violence prevention legislation and the advocacy of gun safety is one place where you can make a significant, thoughtful, and human difference. I respectfully ask that you please sign these bills into law.

Sincerely and Faithfully Yours,

The Right Reverend A. Robert Hirschfeld