March 2, 2018

DELEGED VIA EMAIL RE: Gun Safety

Dear Chairman Beruff and Members of the CRC:

The tragedy in Parkland and the ensuing discussion of antidotes to gun violence are perfect examples of the sorts of things the CRC was meant to address. Even though these horrendous murders came late in your process, we write to urge you to include on the 2018 ballot a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines.

It is no secret that these issues are politically charged, making it difficult or impossible for the Legislature to make any real change. Your Constitution Revision Commission is uniquely positioned to rise above the politics and move some real solutions to the ballot so that Florida Voters have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

You are likely aware of recent polling conducted by Senate leaders that found a strong majority of Floridians across party lines support a ban on military style semiautomatic assault weapons and high capacity magazines. A Quinnipiac poll conducted earlier this week found 62 percent of Florida voters support a nationwide ban on the sale of "assault weapons." A Florida Atlantic University poll released Wednesday found a majority of voters over every party affiliation support stricter gun laws and 69 percent support a ban on assault-style rifles. Polling conducted last week by one of our coalition partners reached similar conclusions. In addition to the 64% of Florida voters who support a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons and ammunition, the poll conducted by Public Policy Polling found that even more Floridians – 74% - would like the opportunity to vote on such a ban. Under each one of these polls, a constitutional ban would be approved by Florida voters.

As the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel editorial board pointed out earlier this week, the Constitution Revision Commission has the ability within its own rules to bring the issue forward. One of the 37 proposed amendments before the commission tweaks the right to bear arms and could be amended to address assault weapons.
There is a big difference between “can’t” and “won’t” – and between “difficult” and “impossible.” We urge you to put politics aside and let the citizens of Florida have their say.

Sincerely,

David L. Barkey, Southeastern & National Religious Freedom Counsel
*Anti-Defamation League*

Joe Saunders, Senior Political Director
*Equality Florida*

Barbara A. Petersen, President
*Florida First Amendment Foundation*

Laura Goodhue, Executive Director
*Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates*

Maria Rodriguez, Executive Director
*Florida Immigrant Coalition*

Terry Sanders, President
*Florida NOW*

Joseph Pennisi, Executive Director
*Florida Policy Institute*

Pamela Goodman, President
*League of Women Voters Florida*

Linda Geller-Schwartz, Florida State Policy Advocacy Chair
*National Council of Jewish Women*

Esteban Garces, State Director
*Mi Familia Vota*

Mark Ferrulo, Executive Director
*Progress Florida*

Monica Russo, President
*SEIU Florida*

Mark Walter, Executive Committee Chairperson
*Sierra Club Florida*

CC: All CRC Commission Members

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