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July 15, 2013

The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte:

Like many Americans, I was shocked that in Florida, a teenager can be pursued and confronted in his own neighborhood, be shot to death, and no one is convicted of a crime. When any child is gunned down and no one goes to jail, it is incumbent on lawmakers at the highest level of government to investigate whether justice has been done, whether the underlying law is just, and whether federal legislation could help avoid another tragic death like the death of Trayvon Martin. I respectfully request that the House Judiciary Committee hold hearings as soon as possible to examine these questions further.

The murder of Trayvon Martin undermines the rule of law, erodes community trust in law enforcement, and exemplifies just how dangerous the combination of rampant fear and easily available guns can be. Even as crime has gone down across the nation, fear of crime, fear of violence, and fear of fellow Americans seems to be ever increasing. When the gun industry exploits this fear to pass laws favorable to their products at the national, state, and local levels, we are creating conditions where death and injury are the only possible result.

In an era when racial profiling threatens the bond between the police in a community and the members of that community, we should investigate why it took almost two months for the local police in Florida to make an arrest in Mr. Martin's murder. There is a widespread feeling in many poor and working class communities that the police are not there to serve them. The Judiciary Committee recently passed legislation you co-authored to drive an even greater wedge between local police and the communities they serve by turning all police into immigration enforcement officers and criminalizing millions of immigrants and their families. We need an open discussion about how to establish and grow cooperation between the local police and all sectors of the societies they protect. It is a festering concern throughout America.

Finally, I note with great sadness that Mr. Martin was just one of hundreds and hundreds of children we have lost to guns. There is no reason in a modern society to accept the sale, marketing, and widespread proliferation of guns as a means for killing other human beings and our laws should reflect that fact.

Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte
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This week, I travel to Aurora, Colorado, just one of the places where, a year ago this week, senseless gun-violence killed 12 people and injured another 70. Day after day and month after month, gun violence is taking the lives of children in the City of Chicago at a horrendous rate. And yet, the House Judiciary Committee scarcely has anything to say about it.

As a Member of the Committee, I respectfully ask that you lead us in examining the panoply of questions left unanswered as George Zimmerman goes free and the Trayvon Martin family mourns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luis V. Gutierrez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress

cc. Rep. John Conyers, Ranking Member