

MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

June 12, 2013

On April 17, four Democrats joined with most Senate Republicans in voting "no" on the Manchin-Toomey background checks compromise, legislation that would have strengthened public safety by tightening loopholes in our current gun laws that allow felons and the dangerously mentally ill to get guns without passing a background check. Instead of rising above politics to pass a law that would save lives, these four Senators—Max Baucus of Montana, Mark Begich of Alaska, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, and Mark Pryor of Arkansas—sided with a gun lobby increasingly out of touch with Americans' priorities.

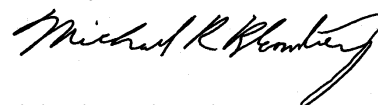
I am writing to ask you: the next time these four Senators want you to support them with donations to their campaigns, tell them you cannot. Until they show that they will stand up for the American people and not the gun lobby, tell them you cannot support their candidacy. These "no" votes were a slap in the face to Americans everywhere. Polls consistently show that 90% of Americans—including 82% of gun owners and 74% of NRA members—support requiring background checks for all gun sales so that illegal guns do not fall into the hands of criminals and the dangerously mentally ill. But instead of standing up for what's right, and for a common-sense measure their constituents support, these Senators made a calculated vote designed to pander to the gun lobby in anticipation of their next election.

When confronted with a tough vote, we expect our leaders to show courage and support the interests of the American people—and many of them did. The background checks compromise was fashioned by two NRA "A"-rated Senators, Joe Manchin (D) of West Virginia and Pat Toomey (R) of Pennsylvania, who bridged the partisan divide crippling the Senate to offer bipartisan legislation that strengthens the federal background check system. Most Senators, including Senators from states with strong traditions of gun ownership, rose to the occasion by supporting the Manchin-Toomey compromise. They understand that closing loopholes that make it easy for felons to buy guns will not weaken gun rights one bit.

But the background checks compromise still fell short of the 60 votes it needed to pass. Senators Baucus, Begich, Heitkamp, and Pryor sided with the minority, reminding us of why so many people are angry at Congress. Astonishingly, the four Senators did this even as they ask New Yorkers, who contributed a significant share of the funding for their last election bids, to donate to them once again. Their votes were an affront to the nation. Make no mistake: loopholes at the federal level undermine our efforts to keep our streets safe.

By voting against background checks, these Senators told us they would rather bow down to a special interest group than support a common-sense measure to help law enforcement fight gun crime. Now you can tell these Senators: by voting against background checks, they voted against your values and your family's safety. And until they show they will stop bowing to pressure from the gun lobby, you should not support them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael R. Bloomberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael R. Bloomberg