

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 5, 2011

Mr. Kenneth E. Melson
Acting Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Office of Public and Governmental Affairs
99 New York Avenue, NE, Room 5S 144
Washington, DC 20226

Dear Mr. Melson:

I oppose the proposed requirement by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) that would force gun dealers in four Southern border states to report guns sales of two or more high-powered rifles sold within five consecutive business days. While I understand the importance of cracking down on violence and gun trafficking along the U.S.-Mexico border, this wide-reaching regulation would punish law-abiding American gun owners and impede on their Second Amendment rights. Instead, we must secure our border and target Mexican drug cartels, as well as participating offenders in the United States.

The persisting violence and crime by Mexican drug cartels is a huge concern for both Mexico and the United States. Mexican President Felipe Calderon has ordered military units to counter criminal efforts. In addition, Mexican drug cartel violence and crime has spilled over the border into the United States. The fact that Mexican cartels were reported operating as far north as my home state in Anchorage, Alaska, indicates not only the extent of their illegal activities, but that we need to do more to protect Americans and secure our border from Mexico. I strongly support immediate action and cooperation between the United States and Mexico to address this issue.

Taking away the Second Amendment rights of Americans will not prevent crime and violence by Mexican drug cartels. The proposed reporting requirement violates Americans' Second Amendment rights and wrongly punishes innocent gun owners and retailers. The proposal is yet another example by the federal government to demand reporting on gun sales as a means of cutting crime. The BATFE's proposal would require roughly 8,500 gun dealers in the United States to report to the agency gun sales "within five consecutive business days [of] two or more semiautomatic rifles greater than 0.22 caliber with detachable magazines." While Mexico's gun laws are far more stringent than those in the United States, these laws have failed to stem violence by drug cartels, which reportedly have access to illegal weaponry not sold by retailers in the United States.

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The fact remains, restrictive gun laws do not prevent criminals from committing acts of violence. While I strongly support cooperating with the Mexican government to secure our border from criminal activity, I believe this requirement would unfairly burden innocent Americans and violate their Second Amendment rights. Furthermore, I believe Congress should be given the opportunity to consider this and other recommendations related to addressing this crisis.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator

cc: Attorney General Eric Holder