

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
**INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

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*Office of the Executive Director*  
**CHRIS W. COX**

February 26, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The National Rifle Association strongly opposes the confirmation of Vivek Hallegere Murthy, M.D., M.B.A., as United States Surgeon General.

The Surgeon General has the important tasks of providing the American public with information to better inform decisions related to their health and directing much of the federal government's public health efforts. In order for these roles to be carried out effectively, the public must trust that the Surgeon General's actions are based on empirical and scientific evidence, rather than political or ideological motives. In this regard, Dr. Murthy's record of political activism in support of radical gun control measures raises significant concerns about his ability to objectively examine issues pertinent to America's 100 million firearm owners and the likelihood he would use the office of Surgeon General to further his preexisting campaign against gun ownership.

In 2008, Dr. Murthy co-founded the organization Doctors for Obama in order to support the presidential campaign of then-Senator Barack Obama and his plans for health care reform. A year later, the group changed its name to Doctors for America, and has since been used to organize support for President Obama and a variety of the administration's political causes. The Doctors for America's website currently lists Dr. Murthy as president of the organization.

In his capacity as president of Doctors for America, Dr. Murthy has offered his support for a wide array of gun control policies that have been repeatedly rejected by the American people and their elected representatives. Most instructive is a January 14, 2013, Doctors for America letter to Congress, advocating for several firearms restrictions, that is signed by Dr. Murthy. A nearly identical January 9, 2013, letter, that was sent by Doctors for America to the head of President Obama's gun control task force, Vice President Joe Biden, also carries Dr. Murthy's signature.

In a proposal that would turn a fundamental, constitutionally protected right into a privilege for the few, the letter to Congress urges mandatory licensing “for anyone purchasing guns and ammunition – including mandatory firearm safety training and testing.” Under Dr. Murthy’s scheme, further regulations would place “limits on the purchase of ammunition,” and establish a “mandatory waiting period of at least 48 hours.”

In the letter, Dr. Murthy also advocates for a “federal ban on the sale” of popular semi-automatic firearms and their ammunition. In an example of letting his ideological agenda outweigh the wealth of empirical evidence, Dr. Murthy and his group propose a “buyback” of these popular types of firearms to “reduce the number... that are currently in circulation.” Even some of the most ardent anti-gun researchers, along with the Department of Justice, have admitted the futility of gun “buyback” programs. Further, the call for a new ban on semi-automatic firearms ignores a 2004 report to the DOJ’s National Institute of Justice which determined that if the 1994 ban were to be renewed, the “effects on gun violence are likely to be small at best and perhaps too small for reliable measurement.”

Another of Dr. Murthy’s proposals would strip vital privacy protections put in place to protect firearm owners and prevent the fracturing of physician-patient relationships. The letter calls for removing “the provision in the Affordable Care Act and other federal policies that prohibit physicians from documenting gun ownership.” Such privacy protections, and their state equivalents, foster trust between gun owners and their physicians, ensuring that the information exchanged during an exam will not be used to curb the patient’s rights. Ironically, some critics of these provisions claimed when they were added to the ACA that they were unnecessary and insisted that the ACA had nothing to do with gun control or the collection of information on private firearm ownership. Dr. Murthy apparently believes otherwise.

Just as troublesome as these positions, are Dr. Murthy’s calls for the federal government to use its involvement in health and medicine to further a gun control agenda. Dr. Murthy’s letter asks Congress to remove restrictions barring the Centers for Disease Control from funding anti-gun advocacy research. It also recommends “removing restrictions in the Affordable Care Act and other legislation that prohibits databases and data collection on gun violence programs.” Further illustrating Dr. Murthy’s willingness to use federal health officials to push gun control, a copy of the Doctors for America letter to Vice President Biden was also sent to Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

The viewpoint expressed in Dr. Murthy’s letters to Congress and Vice President Biden does not represent a fleeting opinion unique to these messages. In late 2012 and early 2013, Dr. Murthy took to his personal Twitter account to promote his gun control beliefs, including a statement on October 16, 2012, that “Guns are a health care issue.” Under Dr. Murthy’s leadership, a 2013

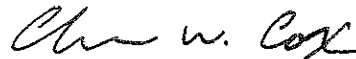
Doctors for America petition urged Congress to “immediately” pass a ban on popular semi-automatic firearms and their magazines. And Doctors for America signed on in support of Sen. Dianne Feinstein’s “Assault Weapons Ban of 2013” (S. 150), which would go far beyond the 1994 semi-automatic ban and severely curtail the availability of firearms Americans currently use for self-defense and other lawful purposes.

The American people deserve a Surgeon General who will carry out the mission of the office unmotivated by political or ideological goals. Given Dr. Murthy’s lengthy history of hostility towards the right to keep and bear arms, along with his calls for the full weight of the federal government’s health apparatus to be used to target lawful gun ownership, there is little reason to believe that he would not work to further a gun control agenda if confirmed as Surgeon General. Simply put, confirmation of Dr. Murthy is a prescription for disaster for America’s gun owners.

It is for these reasons that the National Rifle Association must oppose Dr. Murthy’s confirmation as Surgeon General.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris W. Cox". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris W. Cox  
Executive Director, NRA-ILA

cc: Chairman Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member Lamar Alexander