

The White House: ICYMI: Coalition of doctors, nurses and hospitals call for confirmation of President Biden's ATF nominee Steve Dettelbech

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A coalition of doctors, hospitals and nurses have joined together to call for the confirmation of Steve Dettelbech, President Biden's nominee to lead lead the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. In letters released today, the coalition of eight medical organizations emphasized the health risks of gun violence, particularly to children, for whom gun violence surpassed car accidents as the leading cause of death of last year.

These healthcare providers join a growing chorus of leaders calling for Dettelbach's confirmation, including more than 100 bipartisan mayors, 140 former federal prosecutors appointed by both parties, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, Major County Sheriffs of America, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and numerous other law enforcement groups.

[Bloomberg: Doctors and Nurses Plead for Confirmation of ATF Chief Slowed Down by GOP Objections](#)

[Josh Wingrove, 6/6/22]

- Biden nominated Steve Dettelbach in April to lead gun agency
- ATF has gone seven years without a confirmed director

A coalition of doctors, hospitals and nurses called on the Senate to confirm President Joe Biden's nominee to , with some arguing the agency is an urgent priority following a string of horrific mass shootings.

Eight medical organizations issued endorsements for the nominee, Steve Dettelbach, on Monday in letters obtained by Bloomberg News. But the ATF has long gone without a Senate-confirmed leader because of political disputes over guns between Republicans and Democrats.

Biden named Dettelbach for the post in April after withdrawing his first nominee, David Chipman, a former Justice Department official known for his gun-control advocacy who drew fierce opposition from Republicans.

Since Dettelbach's nomination, the nation has been shocked by a racist attack at a Buffalo, New York, supermarket that killed 10 and the murders of 19 elementary school students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas. That gunman was in the school for almost an hour before authorities confronted and killed him.

"In the wake of the Uvalde, TX, school shooting last week, there's a clear need for swift US Senate action in confirming Steve Dettelbach," wrote Michael Dowling, president and chief executive officer of Northwell Health Inc., a hospital system that says it is the largest health-care provider and private employer in New York.

"While we strongly support Second Amendment rights and the right to bear arms, the national dialog over gun safety – not control – requires the leadership of an ATF director who can identify reasonable solutions and work collaboratively to ensure public safety," Dowling added.

The health organizations that endorsed Dettelbach all emphasized the health risks of gun violence, including to children and at schools. The US has not had a confirmed leader for the ATF in seven years, with Republicans and Democrats riven over gun-safety issues.

"We know what these injuries look like on-site when they occur, on the front-line of care when they are triaged at our hospitals, and in the recovery stages," Lisa Campbell, chair of the Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations, wrote in support of the nomination. "It is imperative that effective leadership be secured for the federal agency charged to enforce the laws that protect the public."

Some of the groups cited CDC data indicating that guns, in 2020, became the leading cause of death for people age 1 to 19, surpassing auto fatalities.

Dettelbach vowed at his confirmation hearing last week that he wouldn't let politics

influence his actions as ATF director, according to the Associated Press.

“Politics can play no role in law enforcement. None at all,” he said.

Even after the Uvalde horror, mass shootings and gun safety remain deeply polarizing issues in Washington. Republicans in Congress continue to block any measures they regard as limiting Americans’ freedom to procure deadly weaponry, including a ban on military-style semiautomatic rifles.

Biden has urged the Senate to take at least incremental steps, such as raising the minimum age required to buy certain semi-automatic rifles. The shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde were both perpetrated by 18-year-old men.

A bipartisan group of senators is in talks on gun-safety measures, though the scope is narrow and it’s not clear if a deal will be reached.

“Regardless of one’s political beliefs or stance on the firearm safety issue, it is time for everyone to come together and stand on common ground to create a safer America for our children,” Michael Nance, a physician and president of the Pediatric Trauma Society, wrote in endorsing Dettelbach.

Without a permanent ATF chief in place, he added, “this lack of stable leadership undoubtedly lessens the effectiveness of the bureau to fulfill its safety mandate.”

(Everytown for Gun Safety, which advocates for universal background checks and gun-safety measures, is backed by Michael Bloomberg, founder and majority owner of Bloomberg News parent company Bloomberg LP.)