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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

May 25, 2016

Nancy Rodriguez
Director
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531

Dear Ms. Rodriguez

I write today to request information regarding the National Institute of Justice's support for scientific research into the causes and prevention of gun violence.

In the aftermath of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, President Obama issued a memorandum in January 2013 directing scientific agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct or sponsor public health research into the causes of gun violence and the ways to prevent it.¹ In response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) asked the Institute of Medicine to convene stakeholders to identify the most pressing research questions on gun violence.² The CDC also met with a number of executive branch agencies to discuss approaches for strengthening data to understand patterns and characteristic of firearm violence, address research questions, and determine opportunities to collaborate on current or future efforts.

To better understand the National Institute of Justice's efforts related to gun violence release and the President's memorandum, please provide the following information:

1. Please describe the National Institute of Justice's policy toward scientific research into the causes and prevention of gun violence.
2. Please describe the efforts the National Institute of Justice has taken or plans to take in response to the President's January 2013 memorandum regarding gun violence research.
3. From 1996 to the present, please describe notable examples of research conducted or funded by the National Institute of Justice related to gun violence. Please also

¹ Presidential Memorandum – Engaging in Public Health Research on the Causes and Prevention of Gun Violence (Jan. 16, 2013).

² In March 2016, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine renamed the Institute of Medicine as the Health and Medicine Division.

provide all instances when the National Institute of Justice included requests for gun violence research in its research proposal solicitation materials.

4. For each year from FY1996 to FY2015, what portion of the National Institute of Justice's budget has been devoted to gun violence research?
5. From 1996 to the present, has the National Institute of Justice faced any obstacles, such as a lack of funding or interest from the research community, in conducting scientific research on gun violence?

Please respond to this letter by June 24, 2016. The Committee's minority staff is authorized to conduct this investigation under the authority of Senate Rule XXV and Senate Resolution 73 (114th Congress). If you or members of your staff have any questions about this request, please feel free to contact Roberto Berrios at (202) 224-2627. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Tom Carper
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

September 2, 2016

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Carper:

This responds to your letter to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Director dated May 25, 2016, regarding NIJ's support for scientific research into the causes and prevention of gun violence. We apologize for our delay in responding to your letter.

As you may know, NIJ is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the Department of Justice (the Department). NIJ is dedicated to improving knowledge and understanding of crime and justice issues through science. NIJ provides objective and independent knowledge and tools to reduce crime and promote justice, particularly at the state and local levels. In general, NIJ works to reduce crime and promote justice by supporting rigorous research drawing on expertise in the physical, forensic, and social sciences. This is accomplished through a combination of extramural (external) projects and intramural (internal) research. The vast majority of NIJ research, development, testing, and evaluation projects are external and funded under competitive solicitations. NIJ's intramural research complements and advances extramural research efforts. NIJ is organized into three science offices, the Office of Research and Evaluation, the Office of Science and Technology, and the Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences. Please see information below from NIJ.

NIJ Research Program

NIJ has an ongoing program of research related to gun violence and gun violence prevention that has existed since the 1980's. This program of research is comprised primarily of external research projects funded through competitive awards. NIJ has also carried out intramural research, convened expert working groups, and supported a critical review of firearms and violence by the National Research Council.¹ The six objectives that currently guide NIJ's program of firearms research are detailed in **Appendix A**.

¹ National Research Council. (2005). *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*. Washington, DC: National Academies of Sciences. Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/read/10881/chapter/1#ii>.

NIJ's firearms research portfolio has made meaningful contributions to knowledge and practice regarding firearms violence and evidence-based practices to reduce firearms violence. The portfolio has evolved over the years based on knowledge gained and emerging needs and priorities in the field. NIJ made an effort to summarize a selection of notable NIJ-funded studies in **Appendix B**, organized by objective. Please note that the opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations in these studies are those of the funding recipients and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the Department.

Recent Efforts

As noted in your letter, the January 16, 2013, Presidential Memorandum entitled *Engaging in Public Health Research on the Causes and Prevention of Gun Violence* was addressed to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). However, consistent with the direction to HHS and the goals articulated in the President's January 2013 actions, including as part of *Now is the Time: The President's Plan to Protect our Children and our Community by Reducing Gun Violence*, NIJ has consistently funded research into gun violence. Please see the then-Acting NIJ Director's February 14, 2013 statement, which briefly described NIJ's investments in gun violence research since the 1980's and announced the 2013 NIJ solicitation titled *Research on Firearms and Violence*.² Since 2013, NIJ has continued to release an annual solicitation to support research on this topic.

The *Now is the Time* plan also called for the Attorney General to work with technology experts to review existing and emerging gun safety technologies and to issue a report on the availability and use of those technologies. Further, it called for the Administration to issue a challenge to the private sector to develop innovative gun safety technologies and provide prizes for those that are proven reliable and effective. In response to this direction, NIJ published *A Review of Gun Safety Technologies* in 2013.³ This report examined existing and emerging gun safety technologies and their availability and use. In support of this effort, an NIJ grantee conducted an assessment of advanced gun safety technologies, typically known by various terms such as smart guns, user-authorized hand guns, child-proof guns, and personalized firearms, compared to conventional firearms. Additionally, in 2015, NIJ published the Gun Safety Technology Challenge. This Challenge, which is ongoing, seeks to determine the reliability of firearms incorporating advanced gun safety technologies when compared to similar conventional firearms. The U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center is testing the articles submitted to this Challenge. Subsequently, the President released a January 4, 2016 Presidential Memorandum entitled *Promoting Smart Gun Technology*. As required by that memorandum, the Department worked with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense to publish the

² Ridgway, G (2013). Statement on NIJ's Role in the National Dialogue on Gun Violence. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.nij.gov/about/director/pages/gun-violence.aspx>.

³ Greene, M. (2013). *A Review of Gun Safety Technologies*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/242500.pdf>.

Report to the President Outlining a Strategy to Expedite Deployment of Gun Safety Technology
in April 2016.⁴

In 2016, NIJ released a solicitation titled *Investigator-Initiated Research and Evaluation on Firearms Violence*. This solicitation highlighted the findings of the 2013 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence*, and emphasized multiple topics and research questions that are of particular priority to NIJ. These include: (1) the characteristics of firearm violence, (2) risk and protective factors, and (3) interventions and strategies.

NIJ Solicitations and Funding

You requested information regarding all instances since 1996 where NIJ included requests for gun violence research in its research proposal solicitation materials. NIJ has consistently solicited for external research related to firearms and gun violence over that time period. In recent years, NIJ has issued a standalone solicitation related to firearms and worked to make firearms research funding available on a more consistent basis. From 2013 to 2016, NIJ released an annual firearms research solicitation in an effort to establish a consistent and predictable source of funding. In previous years, broader solicitations may have included specific requests for research related to firearms. **Appendix C** includes information from NIJ, based on available records, on its solicitations since 1996 that included requests for research related to firearms. Further information about these solicitations may be found at: <http://www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/expired.aspx>.

As to your questions regarding funding, **Appendix D** provides information from NIJ, based on available records, on its funding for firearms research since 1996. NIJ's funding is used to support firearms research, as well as a wide and extensive range of other topics that NIJ has a statutory responsibility to address, including, for example, policing, institutional corrections, violence and victimization, courts, crime prevention, white-collar crime, property crime, and technology development. According to NIJ, the competition for resources among these topics has contributed to inconsistencies in the availability of funding for firearms research from one year to the next.

For some research topics, such as research on domestic radicalization and school safety, Congress provides NIJ with designated funding each year, which enables NIJ to provide the field with more stable and predictable funding opportunities over multiple years. Such funding arrangements enhance NIJ's ability to develop research portfolios that build upon themselves over time. They also help to establish a higher level of competence and experience among a greater number of researchers in the field. According to NIJ, there remain relatively few experienced researchers in the field of firearms violence who have been able to overcome challenges related to data access from criminal justice agencies. With the lack of an experienced pool of expert researchers, the pool of applications that NIJ receives are not as strong or diverse

⁴ (2016). Report to the President Outlining a Strategy to Expedite Deployment of Gun Safety Technology. Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Defense. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/final_report-smart_gun_report.pdf.

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Page Four

as NIJ might otherwise expect. Although the research community appears to recognize the importance of research in the area of firearms violence, without consistent and substantial funding, few researchers are able to make firearm research their central focus. While firearms research continues to be a priority for NIJ, without high levels of experience specifically related to the challenges of conducting firearms research, the research community produces applications that are not as strong as they might otherwise be, and NIJ makes fewer research awards.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "PK" followed by a horizontal line and the word "for".

Peter J. Kadzik
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman

Appendix A:

National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Gun Violence Research Objectives

1. Knowledge-Building

This objective includes basic research aimed at increasing the understanding of firearms acquisition, ownership, and use; the use of firearms in crime and violence; and factors that may inform efforts at prevention and control of firearms violence.

2. Prevention/Intervention Program Evaluation

This objective is focused on studies and evaluations of programs aimed at the reduction of firearms violence. Some of these are comprehensive, involving multiple agencies and strategies; others are more focused in location and scope. Many are specifically targeted to juveniles and young adults.

3. Legislative Assessment

This objective includes studies of Federal, State, and local firearms statutes and policies designed to regulate and control access to and use of firearms. Examples include laws or policies directed at certain types of firearms and those directed at certain prohibited groups, including felons, juveniles, and the mentally ill.

4. Analysis of Secondary (Illicit) Firearms Markets

This objective involves studies of secondary firearms markets – that is, the movement of guns following their initial retail sale by Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) – which facilitate illegal access to weapons by criminals, juveniles, and other prohibited persons.

5. Technology Development

This objective is focused on science and technology to increase the safety and security of firearms ownership and use and to assist law enforcement in detecting and controlling criminal firearms violence. The NIJ initiatives under this objective include the design and testing of concealed weapons detection systems, gunshot locator devices, and “smart gun” technologies for preventing the use of firearms by unauthorized persons.

6. Data Systems Development

This objective involves the improvement of data systems for studying gun violence. Since many of the pressing questions cannot be addressed with limited data, NIJ started this initiative to improve the quality of research conclusions and policy statements.¹

¹ National Research Council. (2005). *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*. Washington, DC: National Academies of Sciences. Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/read/10881/chapter/1#ii>

Appendix B: National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Gun Violence Research Examples

Additional information regarding a selection of notable NIJ-funded studies is provided below, organized by objective. **Please note that the opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations in these studies are those of the funding recipients and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the Department.** NIJ made an effort to summarize the funding recipients' studies below.

1. Knowledge-Building

In 1996, NIJ funded a 4-year study of gun violence among inner-city youth, *Situational Context of Gun Use by Young Males in Inner Cities*, which reviewed "the lessons of the epidemic of youth gun violence in the late 1980's and early 1990's in terms of its impact on adolescent development and the role of aggression in everyday life."¹

In 2001, NIJ funded a multi-year research and program-development effort, *Strategies for Disrupting Illegal Firearm Markets: A Case Study of Los Angeles*, designed to understand the nature of illegal gun markets operating in the city of Los Angeles, California.²

A project funded in 2013, titled *A Tale of Four Cities: Improving Our Understanding of Gun Violence*, focused on gun crime incident review teams.³

2. Prevention/Intervention Program Evaluation

The most notable NIJ-funded evaluation of a firearm violence reduction program was the evaluation of Operation Ceasefire in Boston, a program designed to reduce gang violence, illegal gun possession, and gun violence using a problem-solving, focused-deterrence approach.⁴

NIJ also funded an evaluation in 2009 of the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program.⁵

¹ Wilkinson, D. & Fagan, J. (2002). *Situational Contexts of Gun Use by Young Males in Inner Cities*, Final Report. Columbia University. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/194120.pdf>

² Ridgeway, G., Pierce, G., Braga, A., Tita, G., Wintemute, G., & Roberts, W. (2013). *Strategies for Disrupting Illegal Firearm Markets: A Case Study of Los Angeles*. RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/241135.pdf>

³ Kroovand Hipple, N., McGarrell, E. F., O'Brien, M. & Huebner, B. M. (2016). Gun crime incident reviews as a strategy for enhancing problem solving and information sharing, *Journal of Crime and Justice*, DOI: 10.1080/0735648X.2016.1155303

⁴ Braga, A., Kennedy, D.M., Waring, E.J., & Piehl, A.M. (2001). Problem-oriented policing, deterrence, and youth violence: An evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38(3): 195-225.

⁵ McGarrell, E.F., Hipple, N.K., Corsaro, N., Bynum, T.S., Perez, H., Zimmermann, C.A., & Garmo, M. (2009). *Project Safe Neighborhoods – A national program to reduce gun crime: Final Project Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/226686.pdf>

Please note that the opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations in these studies are those of the funding recipients and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the Department.

3. Legislative Assessment

An NIJ-funded study titled *The Effect of Nondiscretionary Concealed Weapon Carrying Laws on Homicide*, published in 2004, investigated the relationship between state homicide rates and the presence of laws that make it easier for civilians to obtain concealed carry permits.⁶

In 2002, an NIJ-funded study produced a report titled *Effectiveness of Denial of Handgun Purchase by Violent Misdemeanants*.⁷

4. Analysis of Secondary (Illicit) Firearms Markets

In 1997, NIJ funded a study that aimed to assist law enforcement agencies in analyzing the dynamics of illegal markets in firearms and to develop problem-solving interventions designed to help enforce laws against illegal selling, illegal possession, and illegal use of firearms.

Associated reports included *Characteristics and Dynamics of Crime Gun Markets: Implications for Supply-Side Focused Enforcement Strategies*, submitted in 2003,⁸ and *New Approaches to Understanding and Regulating Primary and Secondary Illegal Firearms*, submitted in 2013.⁹

⁶ Hepburn, L., Miller, M., Azrael, D., & Hemenway, D. (2004). The effect of nondiscretionary concealed weapon carrying laws on homicide. *The Journal of Trauma* 56 (3), pp. 676-81. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com>

⁷ Wintemute, G. J., Wright, M. A., Drake, C. M., & Beaumont, J. J. (2002). *Effectiveness of Denial of Handgun Purchase by Violent Misdemeanants: Final Report*. University of California-Davis. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/197063.pdf>

⁸ Pierce, G. L., Braga, A. A., Koper, C., McDevitt, J., Carlson, D., Roth, J., Saiz, A., Hyatt, R., & Griffith, R. E. (2003). *Characteristics and Dynamics of Crime Gun Markets: Implications for Supply-Side Focused Enforcement Strategies*. Northeastern University, MA. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208079.pdf>

⁹ Pierce, G., Braga, A., Wintemute, G., Dolliver, M. (2013). *New Approaches to Understanding and Regulating Primary and Secondary Illegal Firearms*. Northeastern University, MA. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/241021.pdf>

Appendix C:
National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Solicitations
Including Requests for Research Related to Firearms

Fiscal Year	Solicitation Title
1996	NIJ Solicitation: Technology Research and Development Partnership Projects for Community Policing
1997	Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
1997	NIJ Solicitation for the Study of Illegal Firearms Markets
1998	Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
1998	Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Program Research and Evaluation Solicitation
1999	Assessment of the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative
1999	Solicitation for Safe School Technologies
1999	NIJ Science and Technology Solicitation
1999	Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
2000	Office of Research and Evaluation 2000 Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
2000	Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative Solicitation for a Research Partner for the Eastern District of Michigan
2000	Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative Solicitation for a Research Partner for the Western District of New York
2000	NIJ Science and Technology Solicitation
2000	Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative Solicitation for a Research Partner for the District of New Mexico
2001	Office of Research and Evaluation 2001 Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
2001	Solicitation for a Demonstration/Evaluation of the Utility of ATF's Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative
2001	Data Resources Program: Funding for the Analysis of Existing Data
2001	NIJ "Smart Gun" Solicitation
2002	NIJ School Safety Technology Solicitation, FY 2002
2002	NIJ Less-Than-Lethal Technology Solicitation, FY 2002
2002	Science and Technology Solicitation, FY 2002
2002	Office of Research and Evaluation 2002 Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
2003	NIJ Science and Technology Solicitation, FY 2003
2003	Office of Research and Evaluation 2003 Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research
2003	Evaluations of OJJDP Discretionary Funds Projects - Teens, Crime, and Community Works Training
2004	Science & Technology, Fiscal Year 2004
2004	Research on Firearms & Violence

2005	Evaluation of Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention FY 2003 Discretionary Funds Projects
2005	General Forensic Research and Development
2005	Sensor, Surveillance, and Biometric Technologies
2005	Outcomes of Police Use of Force
2006	School Safety Technologies
2006	Sensors and Surveillance Technologies
2006	Biometric Technologies
2006	Research and Development on Impression Evidence
2006	Research and Development on Crime Scene Tools, Techniques, and Technologies
2006	Outcome Evaluations of Violence Prevention Programs
2006	Process and Outcome Evaluation of G.R.E.A.T.
2006	Public Safety Interventions
2007	Research on Policing and Public Safety Interventions
2007	Forensic Science Training Development and Delivery Program
2007	Criminal Justice Technology Centers of Excellence
2007	Evidence-Based Model Programs for Cold Case Units
2007	Research and Development on Crime Scene Tools, Techniques, and Technologies
2007	Research and Development on Impression Evidence
2007	Sensors and Surveillance Technologies
2007	Body Armor for Law Enforcement and Corrections
2007	Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking: Research for Policy and Practice
2008	Sensor and Surveillance Technology
2009	Research and Development in the Forensic Analysis of Trace Evidence
2009	Research and Development on Impression Evidence
2010	Weapons and Protective Systems Technology Center for Excellence
2011	Sensor, Surveillance, and Biometric Technologies for Criminal Justice Applications
2013	Research on Firearms and Violence
2014	Research and Evaluation on Firearms and Violence
2015	Research and Evaluation on Firearms Violence Reduction
2015	Process Evaluation of the Firearm Locks Distribution and Safe Storage Program Research and Evaluation on Firearms Violence Reduction
2015	Research and Development for Publicly Funded Forensic Science Laboratories to Assess the Testing and Processing Physical Evidence
2015	Research and Development in Forensic Science for Criminal Justice Purposes
2015	Gun Safety Technology Challenge
2016	Investigator-Initiated Research and Evaluation on Firearms Violence

Appendix D:
National Institute of Justice (NIJ)
Firearms Research Funding

Fiscal Year	NIJ Approximate Firearms Research Awards*	NIJ Budget**	Approximate Proportion of NIJ Budget Devoted to Firearms Research
1996	\$239,000	\$30,000,000	0.80%
1997	\$766,935	\$31,429,000	2.44%
1998	\$1,085,593	\$42,577,000	2.55%
1999	\$1,778,630	\$46,148,000	3.85%
2000	\$643,802	\$43,448,000	1.48%
2001	\$9,357,125	\$69,846,000	13.40%
2002	\$3,600,765	\$54,879,000	6.56%
2003	\$323,583	\$59,490,000	0.54%
2004	\$1,621,975	\$47,495,000	3.42%
2005	\$1,219,475	\$54,265,000	2.25%
2006	\$968,223	\$54,298,000	1.78%
2007	\$205,891	\$54,298,000	0.38%
2008	\$0	\$37,000,000	0.00%
2009	\$300,000	\$48,000,000	0.63%
2010	\$0	\$51,495,800	0.00%
2011	\$60,000	\$50,929,423	0.12%
2012	\$0	\$46,440,000	0.00%
2013	\$2,673,151	\$46,750,942	5.72%
2014	\$4,206,316	\$46,877,500	8.97%
2015	\$1,911,499	\$43,217,500	4.42%
Total	\$30,961,963	\$958,884,165	3.23%

*Amounts provided by NIJ, based on available records.

**Amounts provided by NIJ, based on available records, are enacted amounts for NIJ Research, Development, and Evaluation Programs (NIJ "Base"), as well as Section 213 Research, Evaluation, and Statistics Set-Aside funds, if applicable. NIJ also receives funds from various sources that may also have been used, where appropriate, to fund Firearms Research. Depending on the source, these funds may also have been used to fund research related to gun violence, firearms technology, and firearms forensics.