

Do Not Stand Idly By

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METRO IAF STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S EXECUTIVE ACTIONS ON GUNS

January 4, 2016

Since early 2013, the faith and citizens' organizing group Metro Industrial Areas Foundation (Metro IAF) – and the *Do Not Stand Idly By* campaign we initiated – have called on President Obama to stop waiting for Congress to act, and to use Executive Branch powers to curb gun deaths in America. In particular, we have asked the President to use the **purchasing power** of the U.S. government to push gun manufacturers to exercise leadership in the areas of gun safety technology and responsible distribution.

At the same time, we have been organizing a group of public-sector gun purchasers – mayors, governors, police chiefs, sheriffs, attorneys general and others – who are willing to use their purchasing power, collectively, to press manufacturers for responsible action. Officials from 82 state and local jurisdictions have launched this effort with us.

Tomorrow, based on what we have learned from White House staff, it appears that the President will take a significant step towards joining them. President Obama will direct the departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Justice to research “smart guns” and other gun-safety technologies, and to begin procurement of appropriate gun-safety technologies for federal personnel. We are eager to see the details. But, if the President is persistent and focused in implementing this approach, it will send a powerful signal to gun manufacturers: there is unmet demand for state-of-the-art gun safety technologies, and the companies that meet this demand will make money.

“With this approach, the President can have a lasting impact on the gun *market*,” said Bishop Douglas Miles of Baltimore, national co-chair of the *Do Not Stand Idly By* campaign (DNSIB). “There is no reason that our troops and federal law enforcement officers shouldn't be outfitted with the best gun safety technology available. And the technologies that are made available to our soldiers and police officers will also become available on the civilian market, where they have the potential to save thousands of lives and prevent thousands of crimes for years to come.”

DNSIB co-chair Rabbi Joel Mosbacher of Mahwah, New Jersey agreed: “By signaling to manufacturers that the federal government is in the market for smart guns, this action will create powerful incentives for responsible conduct by gun manufacturers.”

There is much more to do, of course. DNSIB has also called on the President to pressure manufacturers to establish responsible dealer networks – to sever ties with the small minority of gun dealers that are responsible for the overwhelming majority of crime-gun sales across the country.

“We continue to believe that the best approach to gun violence is, like good detective work, one that *goes upstream* – one that identifies the sources of the problem and holds them accountable,” said Rabbi Mosbacher. “Part of the reason we have an epidemic of gun violence in America is that no one is willing to hold gun manufacturers accountable – to engage them and challenge them to use their power to make America safer.”

“By beginning to use the leverage of procurement, the President will change that dynamic,” Mosbacher said.

“Over the last year, we have been impatient with the President’s reluctance to use the full powers of the presidency,” said Bishop Miles, “and we have been willing to say so.”

“But we have also said that the President can’t do it alone – that we are willing to do everything in our power to help the President whenever he decides to take meaningful action,” Miles said. “The indications today are that that time has come.”

Metro IAF will announce a series of actions on Thursday after learning more about the President’s actions and proposals and consulting with clergy and citizen leaders from its affiliated organizations.