

June 11, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United State Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Republican Leader McConnell:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing millions of sportsmen and women across the country, are writing to respectfully express our strong opposition to the nomination of David Chipman to be Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

At the outset, we would note that the majority of the undersigned organizations have never opposed an ATF nominee. Given Mr. Chipman's longstanding public activism against our Second Amendment freedoms and hunting heritage, however, we are compelled to oppose his nomination. Many of us, for example, are concerned that confirming a high-ranking official of one of the country's most prolific anti-gun organizations would politicize a traditionally apolitical bureau. Others fear Mr. Chipman will weaponize the directorship and lead to the undermining of our Second Amendment rights through punitive administrative actions.

While many of our individual organizations share these fears, our collective opposition to Mr. Chipman's nomination stems from his long record of radical anti-firearm statements and actions. These give rise to our concern that, if confirmed, Mr. Chipman will take proactive steps to impede gun ownership, hunting and recreational shooting in a manner that detrimentally impacts wildlife conservation and management.

In the past year, over ten million Americans purchased a firearm for the first time. A strong percentage of these new gun owners are women or from communities of color. Many of them participated for the first time in hunting and recreational target shooting. For example, there was a 41% increase in new female hunters. This increase in shooting sports activities was accompanied by a 7.6% increase in hunting license sales, which are a vital funding source for state wildlife programs.

Additionally, as a result of various factors – including the COVID-19 pandemic and an associated increase in firearms and ammunition sales – 2020 was a record year for the collection of Pittman-Robertson excise tax receipts. As you are aware, firearms and ammunition manufacturers currently pay a voluntarily imposed 11% excise tax on long guns and ammunition and 10% on handguns. The funding collected goes directly to the States for wildlife and habitat conservation, law enforcement, hunter safety programs and other important uses. What you may not know is that the largest contributors to these excise taxes are purchases associated with recreational target shooting.

Despite these benefits, Mr. Chipman stated once again at his recent confirmation hearing that he supports a ban on the most popular rifle sold in the United States. These firearms, commonly used by sportsmen and women for both hunting and recreational shooting, are owned by tens of millions of law-abiding Americans. As a result, Mr. Chipman's position would deny state fish and wildlife departments hundreds of millions of dollars in desperately needed conservation funds. In addition, in 2017 Mr. Chipman testified before the House Natural Resources Committee in opposition to HR 3668, the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act, a bill that received significant support from our community. As you may recall, the SHARE Act expanded access and opportunities for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting on federal lands – an issue of great importance to America's sportsmen and women.

Based on these positions, it is clear to us that the confirmation of David Chipman as ATF Director would result in significant and far-reaching negative impacts to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters and, importantly, to wildlife and its habitat.

For these reasons, the undersigned organizations strongly oppose Mr. Chipman's nomination to serve as the next ATF Director. We respectfully urge the Senate to reject his nomination in the interests of current and future generations of sportsmen and women and our nation's rich conservation heritage.

Sincerely,

Boone and Crockett Club
California Waterfowl
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Fur Takers of America
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Deer Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Rifle Association
National Trappers Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Wildlife Mississippi
Wild Sheep Foundation