



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Our Nation Can Protect Children, Not Guns

When the Children’s Defense Fund released its new report, *Protect Children, Not Guns 2012* in March, we dedicated it to the memory of Trayvon Martin and the thousands of other children and teenagers killed by guns in America, including the 5,740 killed in 2008 and 2009 according to the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The fight to uncover the truth of what happened the night Trayvon Martin died hasn’t ended but basic facts that have never been in dispute are starkly clear. Of the two people involved, one was a teenager carrying an iced tea and a bag of candy. The other was a much larger adult carrying a gun and patrolling a gated community despite having previously been under a restraining order for domestic violence and charged with resisting arrest with violence and battery on a police officer. Without George Zimmerman, a zealous neighborhood watcher with a gun, Trayvon Martin would be alive today. The same is true for thousands of other children—whether they were victims of deliberate shootings, victims of accidental shootings, or victims of suicide. Guns lethargize anger and despair and twist everyday tensions into life-threatening and life-taking tragedies.

As a nation we need to protect children from guns, support common-sense gun safety measures, and pass stronger federal, state, and local laws that would save many lives. We could start by closing the gun show loophole. The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act requires federally licensed gun dealers to conduct background checks on every gun sale, but a loophole in the law allows private dealers to sell guns without a license and avoid the required background checks. This



CHILD WATCH
Marian Wright Edelman

loophole accounts for a large share of all gun sales. It’s estimated that over 40 percent of all guns in our country are sold by unlicensed private sellers to buyers who did not have to pass a background check.

with hunting animals. As James Alan Fox, professor of criminology at Northeastern University in Boston, said right after the Tucson murders: “Notwithstanding the worn-out slogan that ‘guns don’t kill, people do,’ guns do make it easier for people to commit murder. And semi-automatic guns, like the Tucson assailant’s out-of-the-box spanking-new Glock, make it easier to commit mass murder.”

Our nation should strengthen gun restrictions on people convicted of a violent misdemeanor or a violent act as a juvenile. Under

for protecting children and adults would be requiring consumer safety standards and childproof safety features for all guns. Every gun in this country should be childproof. One-third of all households with children have at least one gun in the home and it’s estimated that nearly two million children live in homes with an unlocked and loaded gun.

It makes no sense that the Consumer Product Safety Commission regulates toy guns and teddy bears but not a product that in 2008 and 2009 killed 56,529 adults and 5,740 children and teens—a total of 62,269 human beings. No external enemy has ever come close to killing this number of civilians of all ages in the U.S. Federal law is silent on gun-related consumer safety standards and child access prevention. In fact, the production and manufacture of guns is exempt from oversight by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. As a result, many handguns do not contain easily-installed life-saving safety features. Only 27 states have even attempted to keep children from accessing guns by passing child access prevention laws. Gun deaths are the third leading cause of fatal injuries in the U.S. for people age one and older—following only motor vehicle and poisoning deaths. Congress must subject guns to the same consumer product safety regulations that cover virtually every other consumer product. Congress also must require childproof safety features on all guns.

Congress must restore the ban on both high-capacity clips and assault weapons. These deadly assault weapons that cause multiple deaths at a time have nothing to do with hunting animals

Congress must require criminal background checks on anyone who attempts to purchase a gun.

Congress should reinstitute the ban on assault weapons. The federal Assault Weapons Ban, signed into law in 1994, prohibited the manufacture and sale of 19 types of semi-automatic military style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines that contained more than 10 rounds of ammunition, but it expired in 2004. Legislation pending in Congress would reinstitute the ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines that were used in the mass shootings in Tucson, Arizona and at Virginia Tech. Congress must restore the ban on both high-capacity clips and assault weapons. These deadly assault weapons that cause multiple deaths at a time have nothing to do

current law, a conviction for a violent misdemeanor doesn’t prohibit a person from purchasing or possessing a gun, and a related loophole exists for people adjudicated for violent offenses as juveniles. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that a person convicted of a violent misdemeanor was eight times more likely to be charged with a subsequent gun and/or violent crime and one in three people convicted of a violent misdemeanor who tried to buy a handgun was arrested for a new crime within three years of acquiring the gun. Congress must close these loopholes and prohibit gun possession by individuals who have been convicted of violent misdemeanors or have been found delinquent for violent acts.

Another common-sense solution

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com



Mourning the Loss of John Payton

“Diverse democracies depend on diverse people who know and respect each other.” – John Payton

Over the past century, the most powerful force behind America’s on-going struggle for equality has been an outstanding group of civil rights attorneys. Imagine where we would be today without lawyers like Charles Hamilton Houston – “the man who killed Jim Crow” — or his protégé, Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, who in 1940 founded the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF). For over 70 years, LDF has been America’s first and foremost civil and human rights law firm. During that time, the organization has had just six leaders: Thurgood Marshall, Jack Greenberg, Julius Chambers, Elaine Jones, Ted Shaw and the LDF’s sixth President and Director-Counsel, John Payton who passed away last week at the age of 65.

Whether he was defending affirmative action before the United States Supreme Court or leading the fight to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, John Payton was one of the most brilliant and fearless civil rights champions of our gen-

TO BE EQUAL

Marc Morial



eration. A graduate of Pomona College and Harvard Law School, Payton’s commitment to civil rights led him from a career at WilmerHale, one of Washington, DC’s most prestigious law firms,

firm’s website, “Beginning in 1997, he led the firm’s representation of the University of Michigan—from the district court through the Supreme Court—in the Gratz and Grutter cases, which hold that public institutions of higher education may consider race as a factor in admissions in order to achieve the educational benefits that flow from having a racially-diverse student body.”

Payton continued his exemplary defense of civil rights at LDF where, in 2010, he won a Supreme Court employment discrimination

Voting Rights Act of 1965.

On a personal note, John Payton was a dear friend and colleague. I had the pleasure of working closely with him on a number of initiatives, including a new effort just underway to develop a collective voice on Education among civil rights leaders. He also recently arranged for the National Urban League to sign onto an amicus brief on the Health Care case that will be argued before the Supreme Court beginning this week.

I admired John’s sharp intellect and enjoyed the lively talks we had about the law and Supreme Court strategy. He was a seasoned, thoughtful litigator who earned a place alongside great civil rights lawyers like Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall. President Obama called Payton “A true champion of equality who helped protect civil rights in the classroom and at the ballot box.” I will miss his friendship, his partnership and his humanity. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Gay McDougall, and his wide circle of family and friends.

Marc H. Morial is the President and CEO of the National Urban League

Payton continued his exemplary defense of civil rights at LDF where, in 2010, he won a Supreme Court employment discrimination case on behalf of a group of Chicago African American fire fighters

to his leadership of LDF beginning in 2008. It was at WilmerHale that Payton laid the foundation as a great civil rights attorney.

According to a statement on the

case on behalf of a group of Chicago African American fire fighters. He also won a Supreme Court victory in Northwest Austin v. Holder, which upheld the constitutionality of a core provision of the