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## **Don't buy claims about Tiahrt gun amendment**

BY CHUCK CANTERBURY

Some of America's mayors, led by Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City and Thomas M. Menino of Boston, would like you to believe that their Mayors Against Illegal Guns Coalition is about fighting illegal firearms in their cities and across the country.

It's not.

The principal goal of this coalition is the repeal of language that has repeatedly been passed into law for the past several years that prevents information on gun traces collected by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from being given to mayors pursuing civil litigation suits against firearms dealers and manufacturers. The mayors would have you believe that law enforcement supports giving them the information on gun traces because many of their employees -- namely police chiefs, who often serve at the pleasure of the mayor -- have publicly backed their coalition.

But the officers in the field who are actually working illegal gun cases know that releasing sensitive information about pending cases can jeopardize the integrity of an investigation or even place the lives of undercover officers in danger. That is why the Fraternal Order of Police has always supported language protecting firearms trace data, now known as the "Tiahrt amendment." For the men and women in uniform who are fighting illegal guns, it is a matter of officer safety and good police work.

ATF itself has repeatedly gone to court to fight the release of its data, because the release can have a negative effect on its efforts to investigate illegal gun trafficking and threaten the safety of officers and witnesses.

In media reports last year, law enforcement sources cited that as many as four cases were compromised and an additional 14 were put at risk by private investigators employed by New York City who acted on the basis of trace data. In this case, the investigators conducted "sting" operations in support of the city's civil suit against several gun stores that had been identified through firearms trace data. As a result, several gun trafficking suspects under investigation by law enforcement changed their behavior to avoid scrutiny and criminal indictment. This is exactly the type of interference that caused the FOP to originally support language restricting the use of the data to law enforcement entities only --not cities engaged in lawsuits.

Bad actors trafficking in illegal guns should be arrested, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced. If these mayors really want to make a contribution to the investigation and apprehension of those who illegally traffic in -- and criminally misuse -- firearms, they should use their political clout to secure additional funding for ATF, instead of trying to develop a shadow enforcement program. Firearms trace data is collected by ATF for public safety, not for civil litigation.

We urge members of Congress to continue to support the Tiahrt amendment. Let's send the bad guys to jail, not civil court.

Chuck Canterbury is national president of the Fraternal Order of Police.

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