

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2016

**RE: Interfaith Coalition Urges Immediate Steps to Mend Divisions between Communities and Law Enforcement**

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leaders Reid and Pelosi:

Mourning the crisis of violence in the United States and recognizing that last week's terrifying shootings in Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights and Dallas are yet another reminder of the great harm caused by unaddressed racial injustices and divisions in America, the undersigned faith organizations join in prayer for healing, love and accountability. As we continue to promote civil dialogue and work to heal community divisions, we also recognize that your leadership is critical to addressing the monumental crisis of racial injustice that has plagued this nation since its inception.

According to data compiled by *The Washington Post*<sup>1</sup>, 990 fatal police shootings occurred in 2015. Surprisingly, reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation have never counted more than 460 police shootings in a single year. Addressing this shocking data disparity is a crucial first step to understanding the extent of excessive use of force by police, and therefore **we seek your support for the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act of 2015 (S. 2168/H.R. 2875)**. The bill would require law enforcement to report data on traffic and pedestrian stops, frisk and body searches, and use of deadly force, including demographic details such as race, ethnicity, age and gender. The legislation would also provide accreditation, training and funding to law enforcement to implement best practice pilot programs.

**Our organizations also urge your support for the End Racial Profiling Act (S. 1056 /H.R. 1933)** to prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement and to support data collection on its prevalence. Nationwide surveys indicate that during traffic stops, black and Hispanic drivers are three times more likely than white drivers to be searched by police. Black drivers are also twice as likely as white drivers to be arrested during a traffic stop despite the fact that police generally have lower "contraband hit rates" when they search black versus white drivers. Additional studies conducted between 2002 and 2008 have shown Hispanic Americans were up to twice as likely and black Americans up to three times as likely as white Americans to experience physical force or the threat of force when encountering police.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/race-and-punishment-racial-perceptions-of-crime-and-support-for-punitive-policies/>

We now know that these acts of racial profiling can have deadly consequences. *The Washington Post's* research<sup>3</sup> found black Americans are 2.5 times as likely as white Americans to be shot and killed by police officers. In 2015, 40 percent of police shootings of unarmed men involved black victims, even though black males comprise just 6 percent of the population. Sadly, these disturbing trends are emblematic of the racial disparities that exist at every stage of the justice system, including the federal criminal justice system.

As an interfaith community, we are guided by our traditions' foundational principles of equality, respect, love and mercy for all people, and we are committed to addressing the United States' deep racial divisions and their consequences. We deplore violent attacks on law enforcement and desire constructive cooperation among all community stakeholders. We hope that Congress will lead the nation in this necessary endeavor to advance justice reforms that build trust between law enforcement and local communities, protect human life, and ensure equality and proportionality. Your work is vitally important and we are eager to engage with you to accomplish these objectives.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
Bread for the World  
Brooklyn Zen Center  
California Council of Churches IMPACT  
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good  
Church of the Brethren  
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office  
Clear Vision Project  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
The Dharma Foundation  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
East Bay Meditation Center  
Faith Action Network – Washington State  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple  
Insight Community of the Desert  
Insight Meditation Community of Washington  
Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
International Center of Chinese Buddhist Culture and Education, USA  
Islamic Society of North America, Office for Interfaith & Community Alliances  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Kentucky Council of Churches  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
Mindful Meditation Community of Charlotte

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/arent-more-white-people-than-black-people-killed-by-police-yes-but-no/?utm\\_term=.4e61cd3b0828](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/arent-more-white-people-than-black-people-killed-by-police-yes-but-no/?utm_term=.4e61cd3b0828)

National Council of Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Jewish Women California State Policy Advocates  
National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Section  
National Council of Jewish Women Illinois State Policy Advocacy Network  
National Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles Section  
National Council of Jewish Women, Minnesota Section  
National Council of Jewish Women, New Orleans Section  
National Council of Jewish Women, South Cook Section  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
New York Insight Meditation Center  
Pax Christi International  
Pax Christi USA  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Rhode Island State Council of Churches  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team  
Sojourners  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
Virginia Council of Churches