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Catholics unite for new gun control measures

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Representatives of a range of national Catholic groups, including those speaking for the country's sisters, brothers, priests and bishops, signed a letter Tuesday calling for stringent new national gun control measures.

The 14 Catholic signers are among more than 40 leaders of a range of faith groups organized under the aegis "Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence."

In a letter to congressional representatives Tuesday, the leaders, who include the heads of a number of prominent Protestant, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu groups, write that "no more time can be wasted" following the December shooting in Newtown, Conn.

"Gun violence is taking an unacceptable toll on our society, in mass killings and in the constant day-to-day of senseless death," write the signatories, who include Stockton, Calif., Bishop Stephen Blaire, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

"While we continue to pray for the families and friends of those who died, we must also support our prayers with action. We should do everything possible to keep guns out of the hands of people who may harm themselves or others."

Among action needed to stem gun violence, the leaders propose rules mandating that every person buying a gun pass a criminal background check; that high-capacity weapons and ammunition be banned; and gun trafficking be made a federal crime.

Included in the other Catholic representatives signing the petition are leaders of both the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents about 80 percent of U.S. Catholic sisters, and the

Conference of Major Superiors of Men, which represents U.S. Catholic brothers and priests in religious orders.

The letter from the faith groups comes as President Barack Obama is expected to announce a plan to reduce gun violence in the country, possibly by executive order, this week following recommendations from a task force set up by Vice President Joe Biden.

Catholic representatives signing the petition in order of signature:

- Fr. Larry Snyder, CEO of Catholic Charities USA
- Daughter of Charity Sr. Carol Keehan, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association
- Kevin Lofton, president and CEO of Catholic Health Initiatives
- Fred Rotondaro, chairman of the board of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
- James Salt, executive director of Catholics United
- Missionary Servant Fr. John Edmunds, president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Dominican Sr. Margaret Ormond, on behalf of the leadership team of Dominican Sisters of Peace
- Patrick Carolan, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network
- St. Joseph Sr. Janet Mock, executive director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious
- Good Shepherd Sr. Gayle Lwanga, national coordinator of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
- Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell, executive director of NETWORK
- Notre Dame Sr. Patricia Chappell, executive director of Pax Christi USA
- Mercy Sr. Patricia McDermott, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Stockton, Calif., Bishop Stephen Blaire, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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