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Coalition Calls for Legislative Special Session to Address Gun Reform

A coalition of more than 60 local, state, and national organizations have called on the Florida Legislature to convene a special session by July 4 to ban assault weapons and strengthen background checks in Florida.

A letter calling for the special session was hand-delivered to Gov. **Rick Scott**, Senate President **Andy Gardiner**, and House Speaker **Steve Crisafulli** a week after a gunman killed 49 people at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, the deadliest shooting in U.S. history.

Led by the League of Women Voters of Florida, the wide-ranging coalition includes:

- Campaign To Keep Guns Off Campus
- Council on American Islamic Relations
- Doctors For America
- Equality Florida
- Florida Parent Teacher Association
- Hispanic Federation
- National Congress of Black Women
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Peace & Justice Institute

No state official has responded.

“We’re calling on our legislators to act now, to demonstrate they can rise above partisan politics to protect the lives of the citizens they were elected to represent,” said **Pamela Goodman**, President of the Florida League.

Dr. **Mona Mangat**, Chair of Doctors for America, explained why her organization joined the coalition.

“Physicians see firsthand the devastating toll of gun violence on our patients and in our communities,” she said. “Everyday gun violence claims the lives of 91 Americans and injures countless others. Many of those who survive carry physical and emotional trauma for the rest of their lives. We simply cannot wait for change any longer. Leaders in Florida must act now to save lives and prevent future tragedies by supporting common-sense gun safety legislation.”

“And it’s not enough for state legislators to wait for the federal government to act,” said **Patricia Brigham**, chair of the state League’s Gun Safety Committee.

“That’s passing the buck,” she said. “Demonstrate not just to your constituents but to the National Rifle Association and other gun lobbies that you can think for yourselves and conclude that weapons designed for the battlefield should not be accessible to civilians.”

The letter notes that seven states, including California, Massachusetts, and New York, have banned assault weapons and that eight states prohibit large capacity ammunition-feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds.

The Pulse massacre is just the latest example of not only the accessibility of these weapons, but the ease with which they can be bought. The coalition calls for comprehensive universal background checks, including for private parties selling guns.

“Our charge is strengthened by this amazing group of organizations that are willing to take a stand and call out our legislators for inaction,” Goodman said.

“Gov. Scott, Sen. Gardiner and Rep. Crisafulli, now is your chance to show you are listening and have the courage to lead before another shooter claims even one more precious life in Florida.”

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