June 28, 2013

United States House of Representatives
1501 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Larson:

On behalf of our over 9,500 members, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the firearms and ammunition industry’s trade association, I am writing today to inform you that, unfortunately, due to recent events NSSF can no longer support the Coltsville National Historical Park Act (S. 615 and H.R. 1259).

As you know, America’s firearms industry was founded in Connecticut when Eli Whitney invented interchangeable parts for the manufacture of firearms in New Haven. Many of our industry’s iconic American brands were founded in Connecticut, including Colt, Remington, Ruger, Winchester, Marlin and Mossberg. The Connecticut River Valley is still, to this day, known as Gun Valley.

Our industry has a proud heritage and tradition in Connecticut. But our industry is more than just a legacy. The firearms industry is, still today, an important and vital part of Connecticut’s economy. Our industry members in Connecticut, like Colt’s Manufacturing Company, LLC and O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc., as well as newer companies like Stag Arms, Ammunition Storage Co. and PTR, are responsible for creating over 7,300 good paying jobs, paying almost $525 million in wages, over $300 million dollars in state and federal taxes and contributing nearly $2 billion dollars to Connecticut’s economy.

Regrettably, the Connecticut legislature recently unlawfully enacted jobs-killing legislation that bans many of the most popular and commonly-owned firearms, including modern sporting rifles, which our members make and sell after a background check to law-abiding Connecticut residents exercising their Second Amendment rights.

This legislation will result in a loss of jobs and a further-weakening of the state’s already nation-lagging economy. Last week, Texas Governor Rick Perry and South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard visited Connecticut-based firearms manufacturers to recruit them to relocate their businesses to their respective states. Just this week, representatives from PTR Industries announced at a press conference with South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, that they were moving their factory to South Carolina from Bristol, Connecticut, and the decision to move was in direct response to this gun control legislation.

While other state economic development agencies and governors vie for industry members to move their factories, jobs and taxes to their more welcoming states, Governor Malloy and Senator Murphy publicly accuse our industry of just wanting to sell as many guns as possible to criminals and the mentally ill, and
that selling guns to criminals is part of the industry’s business model.

When NSSF sought to attend the widely advertised House Democratic Gun Violence Task Force public hearing in Hartford recently, we were refused entrance.

Our industry is offended by the hypocrisy of our elected officials in Congress and the state government that simultaneously advocate for legislation that pays homage to our industry’s heritage and legacy in Connecticut by establishing a National Park on the site of the legendary, iconic Colt factory, while at the same time pursue gun control legislation. As major contributors to the state’s economy, we find it unacceptable for lawmakers to propose banning our products and hindering the ability of Connecticut companies to grow their businesses; create more good-paying manufacturing jobs; and contribute hundreds of millions in taxes. Our Connecticut members are unwilling to trade valuable manufacturing jobs for ticket-taker jobs at a national park.

Like all Americans, members of our industry were deeply shaken and saddened by the horrible events that took place in Newtown. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families and the victims of this terrible tragedy. We share the goal of wanting to find ways to try to make our communities and children safer. Reasonable minds can and do disagree on how best to achieve this shared goal. We must all work together to help prevent those who exhibit reckless disregard for human life and values, access to firearms for criminal purposes. But we must also preserve the constitutional rights of tens of millions of law-abiding Americans to safely and responsibly own, store and use firearms for personal protection, hunting and recreation. Our industry is one of the few bright spots in a still struggling national economy.

We would hope that as members of Connecticut’s Congressional delegation, you would work as hard to ensure the future vitality of Connecticut’s firearms industry members as you are in paying homage to the history and legacy of our industry here in Connecticut. Until then, we simply cannot in good conscience support the Coltsville National Historical Park Act - S. 615/H.R. 1259.

Sincerely,

Larry Keane

CC: Governor Dannel Malloy