

Dear Senator Marco Rubio,

Let me first say that I appreciate your appearance at the CNN Town Hall Meeting. I watched it both on CNN via satellite and on YouTube some hours later (to catch the first half). Your presence was noted and seen, and appreciated by me because of just how many Republicans failed to appear. The Parkland shooting is an event that affects us all, whether we live in Florida where the Parkland shooting occurred, in Las Vegas where the Las Vegas Massacre occurred some few months ago, or in another state and city. We're all Americans and the loss of our children should affect us because they are our future. So, your effort is commendable.

I gathered from the CNN Town Hall Meeting that you're someone who wants to work across party lines to get things accomplished for the good of this country. I know very little about your voting record, except to say that you're a Republican and I'm aware of how Republicans vote on quite a few issues. But I, like Jaime Guttenberg's father, who was present at the Town Hall Meeting, want to like you. You seem like a guy who is interested in hearing what the Parkland school shooting victims had to say.

The other Republicans in your state (Florida) and across the country didn't even man and woman up to appear at what should've been a significant event. Most of them probably spend more time at fancy banquet dinners raising donations for their campaigns than spend time with innocent children who have had to be a victim to a tragedy that no child should experience.

I heard some things from you at the Town Hall Meeting that I wanted to address while my mind is fresh, which is why this letter comes just a few days after the event. I'll address my concerns below.

First, you said the following at the CNN Town Hall discussion: "I do support the Second Amendment, and I also support the right of you and everyone

here to be able to go to school and be safe.” And yet, allowing the Second Amendment to lead to unrestricted gun access puts the safety of children at risk in schools. If one takes too far a position on child safety and bans weapons of any kind anywhere, at any time, then citizens won’t have any form of protection for themselves - which leaves them vulnerable in isolated situations.

There has to be a middle ground, a compromise, that preserves the rights of children to live in safety in schools and to allow gun owners to maintain the right to defend themselves. Limiting guns by way of eliminating assault weapons is the way to go. No civilian needs assault weapons. Point blank. To say that you’re for the rights of children to be safe in schools, all while allowing these military-style assault weapons to continue flourishing in mass supply (in light of the Parkland shooting), is rather dishonest, in my view. It’s like saying, “I’m for the rights of people to live” but then receive money from marijuana, heroin, and cocaine producers and say, “But, no matter the number of drug deaths, I refuse to sponsor a bill that would effectively ban these drugs from being on the market.” It’s not only dishonest but incoherent and inconsistent.

Next, I listened to the CNN Town Hall statement to provide a quote that you said in your response to Cameron Kasky when he asked you to promise you’d never receive another NRA donation:

“People buy into my agenda. The influence of these groups comes not from money. The influence comes from the millions of people that agree with the agenda, the millions of Americans that support the NRA and who support gun rights groups...I will always accept the help of anyone who agrees with my agenda.”

This statement is problematic because first off, your agenda should be the public welfare. Your agenda should be the agenda of the US public, of the

country's population. You may have dabbled into party politics as a candidate, Senator, but your job now is to ensure that the interests of the public as a whole are served. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure that the NRA only has 5 million members; how do the interests of the NRA match those of the whole when there are over 350 million US citizens? 5 million verses 350 million. Basic math tells us that 5 million never trumps 350 million.

By aligning with the NRA and taking their money, you're putting the interests of a few above the interests of the majority. That's not how laws are made in this country; laws are made to protect everyone as much as possible, and the majority in cases where the laws do not appease everyone. So, what you really are for the NRA is a special interest politician, not a US Senator; and by taking money from them and refusing to reject their blood money, you're playing the role (think biblically with me here) of a Judas who's been paid off by the Pharisees to betray Jesus --- all while claiming that you're doing nothing wrong. But you are. You claim to be about what's best for this country, you claim that you've created bills that the Republicans have done little about, but what good is all that if, in the end, you're simply going to do what all other Republicans do and accept NRA money?

Again, I want to like you. I want to think that you're one who will vote your convictions, but I see you say one thing and then do something else. You couldn't answer Cameron Kasky's question about not receiving NRA money because you know that, when the chips fall, you're going to always cast a vote in favor of the NRA. You believe in the Second Amendment, you say, but you can defend the Second Amendment and say NO to assault weapons. You like guns and the NRA likes guns, and "like breeds like," as they say. But Senator Rubio, you cannot accept NRA money and then claim you don't represent their interests. If you didn't represent their interests and vote like their money dictates, then you wouldn't have an A+

rating with the NRA --- nor would you be paid \$3.2 million a year in campaign donations.

So, the truth of it all is that you need campaign money, and they provide it. Well, answer me this: what good will that campaign money do for you when you lose your Senate race and seat and find a Democrat occupying it? You do realize that Senators are dispensable in the minds of the NRA, don't you? You do see that the NRA only loves you and donates to you because of your Senate position; without it, they wouldn't know your name or care, for that matter. And this year and in 2019, anyone affiliated with the NRA will be voted against. The wave of social media will stain the reputation of anyone associated with the National Rifle Association.

You are a believer in Scripture; I saw an Isaiah quote on one of your social media accounts recently. Well, I too, believe in Scripture. You and I both love God and fear God, and we want to live in a country where we can hold to the values of faith and family. As do I. But this is a time in which you have to see the handwriting on the wall: the country is against assault weapons and wants them banned. You are in a position to make that happen, but you're choosing to side with the NRA instead because all you can think about is their donation money.

But you're a man of conviction, right? I'm sorry, but a man of conviction doesn't need to accept bribes. Now, you may quickly say, "But I'm supporting them because they agree with me." Well, you're interested in raising the firearms purchase age from 18 to 21, but they're not about that. So, if they agree with you, then that means you don't care about school safety --- because they don't. They've done nothing more than pass the blame to the FBI, schools, and states, and President Trump has said that he wants to arm teachers --- again, you disagree with that. Why disagree with the idea of arming teachers when the NRA would love that idea? You do see the rationale behind Trump's idea, don't you? Giving teachers guns increases profits of gun manufacturers and increases NRA membership.

If you're against that, then, you have to publicly admit that you're going against the NRA. But if you don't, and you accept NRA money because they "agree with my interests," as you claim, then you really don't care about schools and only want to keep the NRA and the manufacturer members of it (who make money from gun production) happy. You can't have it both ways.

You're a United States Senator. A United. States. Senator. Your goal as a public servant is to unite the nation, not divide it. Currently, the nation is for the ban of assault weapons, every single one of them (though maybe 200 will be banned at first). And yet, you're against it because "if I believe it would've prevented the Parkland shooting, I would've voted for it." I don't believe it, and neither does America.

These gun manufacturers pay the NRA, and thus, pay your campaign donations. You're a servant hired by them, in that sense. And yet, you claim to represent "We the People." It's time you remember who elected you in the first place: the people. And there are a number of Republican constituents who no longer want assault weapons easily accessible to 18-year-olds. You're willing to raise the age of purchase, but that's not enough. It's not enough to remove weapons out of their hands for 3 years. In 3 years, an 18-year-old will be 21, and, thanks to your NRA buddies, he'll still have access to AR-15s and AK-47s that, as your colleague Senator Bill Nelson (D) of Florida said, are manufactured in Florida by companies such as the Colt Corporation because Florida law has handed them money to make guns there. 3 years will save the lives of children, but it won't stop him from killing that same graduating class in 3 years. If he is prevented from killing a high school freshmen class, for example, he'll still be able to murder them as seniors because they'll still be at the same high school 3 years later. In other words, delaying the age of purchase by another 3 years will only delay the slaughter; it won't deter the shooter and it won't save that same class of children.

Since you're a man of faith, I want to talk to you as two people of faith, two people who believe in living our lives by The Good Book, the Bible. Judas accepted the money from the Pharisees and, when Jesus is put to death and Judas realizes Jesus is innocent, he says, "I have betrayed innocent blood." He didn't blame the Pharisees; he didn't blame other entities, and he didn't say, "I'm innocent, despite the fact that I took the money." He handed Jesus over to them by kissing Him on the cheek. You have "kissed the cheek" of the NRA far too many times. You have kissed the cheeks of gun manufacturers who are NRA members too many times. The result of your alliance with them has been the death of innocent children. Let's face it: the gun manufacturers in the NRA don't care about children getting killed --- as long as they sell another gun to another consumer.

They've spent so many years wringing their hands and saying to the press, "we're not guilty bc some maniac took matters in his own hands and used our guns to kill other people." And yet, that maniac chose their gun, a gun they manufactured, with which to do the deed. If someone drives a mass school shooter to the school, puts him off, and runs the other way as he's shooting, does that person escape guilt? No; you would be part of the movement to put the driver behind bars. And yet, you "drive" gun profits, you drive AR-15 profits, the profits of the same gun used to slaughter 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, but now claim that "I am innocent, I stand by my own convictions, I am not guilty." Even Judas realized that to take the money from the Pharisees was to be complicit in their deed.

The gun manufacturers who are, no doubt, in the NRA and are supported by the NRA, are the same people whose "sell more guns, make more profits" mantra you continue to protect by continuing to receive NRA campaign donations. And in this, you're complicit. Only a complicit man

would receive funding. If you're innocent, you'd drop them like a bad habit. Pronto.

Either you're for school safety or you're not. Guns are not designed to protect; they're designed to kill, and no animal rights individual would be okay with guns being anywhere near animals. In the same vein, you, if you're for school safety, wouldn't be alright with taking campaign donations from gun manufacturers who design weapons for the sole purpose of killing. Yes, knives are used as weapons in particular cases, but knives were designed to cut and chop food (not people). Name one other purpose for which guns were created. There is none.

The gun manufacturers are in their business to make a profit (who cares about the consequences and the impact of guns, right?), but you're a man of conviction, a man of faith, a man of God who believes in the sanctity of human life. You're anti-abortion, you believe that all children conceived in the womb should grow to term, that no mother or father should get away with killing a child. You would pass legislation to increase jail time for negligent parents who left their child unattended with a gun. If you'd do these things, then why let mass shooters (or shooters in general) have unrestricted access to AR-15s and assault weapons? There is no point in it, and you're inconsistent to be pro-life on one hand but not on the other.

Your pro-life stance means little if you allow gun manufacturers to sell their guns to whoever they want. These military-grade rifles have no business being in the hands of civilians, whether 18 or 21 years of age. No one in normal life needs a gun the size of an AR-15. To assume otherwise is merely paranoid. I know you agree that they don't need them, but you feel as if banning them will kill off gun manufacturer profits. In the end, it won't; civilians will buy the guns that are made available to them for protection. But the gun manufacturers will not cease gun production of AR-15s and AK-47s because Florida law is giving them financial incentives. The only

way to undercut their motivation is to hit them where it hurts: in their pockets. And you're the US Senator who's been sworn in to look after the public welfare and ensure domestic tranquillity. It's your job, your duty, your divine calling, to do so.

I want to like you, Senator Rubio, I truly do, and I want to think that you're a man of Christian conviction who "calls a spade a spade" and "tells it like it is," but I think you're being dishonest with yourself, the NRA, and the survivors of Marjory Stoneman Douglas. What would Jesus do? He wouldn't approve of you endorsing companies who're in the "design to kill" business. James says in Scripture that it's no good to tell a man "be filled" when he's hungry but give him no food, that to see a man beaten among thieves and left for dead, as the priests did, but walk on by and do nothing. By wanting to raise the age (which only delays the inevitable) and not do something about what could be "the inevitable" is to see a need and yet turn a blind eye to it. It's not what our Lord would do, and it's not what you've been sworn in to do.

You're to defend and protect our citizens, whether unborn, children, adults, or elderly. You can't defend them AND the gun corporations and manufacturers. You can't defend them AND the NRA. You can't limit guns on one hand and keep the NRA profits at the same level. You have to choose; and that choice, whether for right or wrong, will affect you and this nation in the days, months, and years to come. And your children and children's children could, though I pray against it, someday be victims. I don't want any more children to die, and I'm willing to limit guns and ban assault weapons if need be.

Don't be a Judas. Don't continue to take the NRA's money and then say, "The blood of America's children is not on my hands." Like Judas, it is, if you continue to take NRA money. No one's holding your past affiliation with the NRA against you, but you've got to end this affiliation. I expect a public announcement when you do, and I expect, like the survivors of the Marjory

Stoneman Douglas High School, a proverbial “look in the eye” at the NRA with the words, “I will no longer accept your campaign donations. I am a man of integrity.”

Can you do that, Senator Rubio? I sure hope so. That \$3 million a year, as great as it may be, won't exist if you continue to put the NRA above the safety of our children. The NRA supports unrestricted access to guns, allowing mass school shooters to obtain them; the other side says that these assault weapons should be banned because they're designed to kill, to fire off 150 rounds of ammo in 6-7 minutes (as was the case with Parkland). There can be a compromise, but the NRA won't escape unscathed; not only will they have a tarnished reputation, as they already do, but they'll have to lose profits in order to limit assault weapons for the safety of our children.

Whatever you think about the FBI, the states, law enforcement, etc., they are only part of the problem behind the Parkland shooting at MSD. The other half of the problem is the shooter's unrestricted access to guns. I call for an assault weapons ban, and, since you're one to go against the grain of your party for your convictions, I expect you to lead the way with a new assault weapons ban bill. Democratic Senator Bill Nelson will be glad to help you; team up with him, and ban assault weapons. Before that, though, be a Christian man of integrity and cease your affiliation with the NRA.

Though the tone of this letter has been harsh, and some of my words unkind, I have only said them with the goal of reminding you of your duty to protect and serve America, not special interests. *The Lion King* is a movie that I've loved forever and a day, and it's designed for children, but its message is a good one for us adults, too. Mufasa told Simba, “Remember who you are.”

Senator Rubio, **remember who you are.**

You're a man of conviction, a man of faith, a public servant of the people, a man sworn to protect and defend even the smallest of us. The NRA doesn't share that interest, and so, it's time to cut the cord on the NRA. It's time for you to take a stand and say NO to the NRA. If you don't do it for me, or for yourself, or for your Republican Party, do it for the children. Do it for the least of us. May the Lord bless you and keep you and aid you in the mountain of work you have to do to revive domestic tranquillity in the days ahead.

Respectfully Submitted,

A Concerned Pastor