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Letter to the Editor

Joseph A. Califano Jr. is wise in urging swift action on gun control, following President Lyndon B. Johnson's legislative strategy in 1968 after the gun assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. But Johnson also formed the bipartisan National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, chaired by Milton Eisenhower, then president emeritus of Johns Hopkins University.

By 1969, Eisenhower and eight others on the 13-member panel recommended confiscation of most handguns, restrictions on new handgun ownership to those who could demonstrate reasonable need, and identification of rifle and shotgun owners. Eisenhower received thousands of hate letters against the recommendations, and neither the new Nixon administration nor Congress acted. But the coalition-building lesson remained: A Republican like Eisenhower worked with Democrats and other Republicans to thoughtfully consider all options to reduce violence.

After the massacre in Newtown, Conn., the grass-roots coalition that is needed to aggressively force action with the likes of the Brady Campaign, Mayors Against Illegal Guns and the Children's Defense Fund should begin with racial minorities, women, outraged parents, teachers, youthful voters, grandparents and gay voters.

In response to a movement that builds on such demographics, we need to transparently debate all options, as did the National Violence Commission. The task force that President Obama has formed to recommend meaningful action on these and many other options would be foolish not to first review the National Violence Commission's final report.

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The writer is president of the Eisenhower Foundation.

This letter responded to an op-ed by [Joseph A. Califano, Jr.](#) in the Washington Post on December 17, 2012.