

**Testimony by Michael V. Rosenberg, 151 Eastbury Hill Rd, Glastonbury, CT 06033,  
in support of HR5818 "An Act Concerning Lost/Stolen Firearms."**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Rosenberg. I live in Glastonbury, CT. I am here to speak in support of HB5818 – “An Act Concerning Lost/Stolen Firearms,” although I’m not sure why anyone should need to testify in FAVOR of such a bill. It is, as my son would say, a “no brainer.”

Essentially all of the 227 million or so firearms in this country started out in perfectly acceptable and legal channels – licensed manufacturers, wholesalers distributors and retailers – by and large an honest and reputable group that is probably more honest and reputable than the public at large since they are licensed and subject to some degree of oversight. The vast majority of those firearms end up in the hands of final owners that are, also, decent and honest people.

Unfortunately “the vast majority” is not “all.” In 2004, an estimated 450,000 Americans were victims of crimes involving an offender with a firearm<sup>1</sup> -- and the majority of those offenders could not legally possess the firearms they used.

So how DID they get their firearms? How did a firearm that started out in perfectly legitimate hands end up in the hands of someone who was not entitled to possess it?

There are three, unfortunately too common and too easy ways:

1. The firearm was purchased by an illegal possessor from a legal one in an unregulated sale (what is often referred to as the “gun show loophole” but actually includes any private sale or transfer).
2. The gun was stolen from a legal owner.
3. The gun was purchased by a “straw purchaser” – an individual who could, legally, obtain a firearm but did so for the purpose of illegally transferring that firearm to someone who could not legally obtain one.

HB 5818 helps address (and differentiate between) the last two of these ways. Simply, it says that firearm owners must report stolen firearms within 72 hours of the time at which they could be reasonably expected to be aware of the theft.

This is where we come to the “no brainer” part.....

Twenty five years ago, my home in Glastonbury was burglarized. Two years ago, my daughter’s apartment in Wethersfield was burglarized. Not exactly a crime wave, but

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<sup>1</sup> 2004 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

trust me when I say that, in both cases, the second thing we did (the first was calling the police) was check to see what was missing – and that meant the things of value. We didn't inventory socks or tee shirts; we looked for the jewelry and the TV.) We aren't gun owners, but had I owned a firearm, it would have been first on the list. Not because it would have been the most expensive item lost, but because guns are easily sold and prime pickings for a thief planning on rapidly disposing of the stolen goods and because gun ownership requires the responsibility of knowing where that weapon is, that is at least as great as knowing where my teenaged son is (and, as the NRA is fond of pointing out, unlike teenaged sons, guns don't get up and move around on their own). With or without insurance, it would seem to me that reporting the loss of a firearm is far more important to law enforcement than reporting the loss of great grandma's gold wedding band or a TV set.

Whether I have insurance or not, I'd report the loss for financial reasons alone – either to recover the costs from the insurer or to have the actual firearm eventually returned if it is recovered.

If that were the only reason HB5818 was a “no brainer”, it would have been enough. But there is a second reason that is at least as important.

Remember the third way firearms are diverted to illegal owners? The “straw purchaser”?

Others will dwell on this issue in far greater detail, so let me be brief. When a firearm is used in a crime and recovered, one of the issues frequently facing the police is how the individual (especially one who was already ineligible to have it) obtained the firearm. That process, when undertaken, requires starting with the manufacturer and then tracing the succession of legal owners through the distribution chain to the individual who purchased it from the dealer. At that point, law enforcement tries to locate that individual and ask what happened to the weapon.

The easiest dishonest response for the straw purchaser is “It was stolen.” That absolves him of any responsibility for the transfer unless the police can prove otherwise. HB5818 makes that answer easier to check out and more difficult to use dishonestly, because, under HB5818 there must be a record of that report and the next question will be “When and where did you report the theft?”

As I said, it's a “no brainer.”

So why is there a need to speak in favor of such a bill? Who can be against such sensible legislation?

Strangely (or maybe not so strangely) to many of us, the NRA and its local affiliate, the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen are. They are calling HB5818 :”The Gun Trafficker Protection Act.” Robert Crook, Executive Director of the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen contends that “permit holders could buy guns, wait a few weeks, report them

stolen, then sell them to criminals”<sup>2</sup> – the argument offered by the NRA, itself, last year when the same measure came up as part of HB6657.

Does anyone here really believe that a straw purchaser is going to take the risk of calling attention to him/herself in that way, before the gun is actually recovered?

Understanding that many straw purchasers (“gun traffickers”) will buy multiple guns over time to resell at a profit, how many times does anyone here think this process will be repeated by an individual straw purchaser before red flags go up? (Remember, the straw purchaser doesn’t know which gun will, eventually be recovered – and hopes that none will)?

Can anyone find anything in the act that makes an illegal report before the act of transferring the gun, as protection in case the firearm IS eventually recovered, sound more attractive to the straw purchaser than a false declaration to police given only in the event to firearm actually is recovered, absent an act like HB5818?

That argument is a stretch – even for the NRA and the Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen.

In conclusion, this act imposes no hardship on any responsible firearm owner, benefits law enforcement by alerting them to firearms that really are stolen and deters straw purchasers from false claims the firearm was stolen (or at least gives the police a tool to use in challenging that assertion).

In short, it’s a real “no brainer.” I strongly urge you to approve HB5818.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> Tobin A Coleman, “Legislators set sights on stopping gun sales to criminals”, The Advocate, March 23, 2006