Connecticut Firearm Regulations Largely Adequate – Deficiencies Elsewhere

Legislators,

We have heard that limitations on firearm magazine capacity and the removal of scary-looking firearms from the citizenry "just make sense." That's a totally unsubstantiated statement to the critical thinker, but is accepted as truth to the emotionally charged.

The majority of those clamoring in the media for tighter gun controls can be counted upon to quickly resort to name calling and attempting to invalidate opposing opinions. This type of demonstrated behavior can be expected from a panic-stricken public and the anti-firearm political manipulators in a debate where there are insufficient facts or where those facts presented are cherry-picked. This response technique is also a great way to suppress differing opinions. After all, isn't it great to hear that your politician thinks your opinions are wrong-minded and ridiculous?

Cries for additional firearm restrictions are often made in a knee-jerk manner in response to emotionally charged acts of domestic terrorism such as Newtown. To enact broad measures to fill narrow situational circumstances will build political favor and calm the public conscience. But at the end of the day, is the law-abiding individual more secure and is the criminal less deadly? Levelheaded thinking is necessary for an effective outcome.

I am aware that the phrase "guns don't kill people, people kill people" is a worn out cliché, but it's true in every case we see of gun violence. Highlighting the weaponry used to commit violent acts as the priority deflects from the root cause of the violence; i.e. the criminal, whether that person is sane or insane.

Connecticut is ahead of the vast majority of states in the contentious subjects of firearm registration, tracking, and purchaser vetting by enacting some of the country's most thorough legislation regarding the purchase of firearms and has created a reasonable definition for the assault rifle. Of course this is valid only for those who "legally" obtain firearms. Even a "ban everything" gun control posture does not apply to the criminal.

As covered by the media, governmental legislation proposals concerning integrations of magazine and firearm configuration effectively remove, thus making illegal, most modern rifles, handguns, and a great many shotguns already in vetted Connecticut residents' possession. The issue before us is not gun use by these upstanding citizens, but is the violent use of firearms by the criminal element.

I would ask, "Are the armed criminals that police encounter the same criminals that a victim of a violent crime encounters? Does the violent criminal choose their weaponry and strategy based on whether or not they will encounter police verses merely the intended victim?" With the

exception of organized crime, the answer to both questions is a resounding "of course they are the same criminals!"

In general, our society believes it justified for law enforcement to be armed with, or have ready access to, fully automatic weapons, high-capacity firearms, and armored vehicles when dealing with violent criminals. I am comforted to know this, since law enforcement personnel are our last line of defense.

Yet in reality, the first responder to a criminal act, especially a violent real-time crime, is the victim. The often cited WARREN V. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA demonstrates the current judicial mindset that law enforcement's responsibilities begin after the initiation of a crime, meaning that police have no legal obligation to provide an individual with protection unless an officer is specifically assigned to protect that individual – regardless of whether the individual is the occupant of a public facility or a government building, a member of the legislature, etc. Even more, municipal resources (paid for by taxpayer dollars) used in these various ways can only go so far before the funds are ineffective; therefore, making the individual the sole legally responsible party for his or her own defense and protection.

I believe that existing Connecticut legislation concerning firearm hardware allows a reasonable level of flexibility when it comes to my rights to protecting my family, whether that be in our home or in a public place. If individuals would rather not take personal responsibility for their first line of safety, then that's their business. But shouldn't minors, while not in the care of their parents, be afforded protection via adequate school security measures? If individual municipal facilities warrant extra care to prevent violence, protect sensitive facilities with more than just a "this is a gun-free zone" declaration.

Criminals can equip themselves in any manner that money and/or the supply chain can offer. If legislation diminishes a citizen's defensive effectiveness, it is only reasonable that the legislator arrange for specific governmental agencies to be held responsible and become liable for that citizen's protection. Do the lawmakers fear the legal repercussions of this type of quid pro quo?

The Connecticut Department of Public Safety is currently sending firearm "registration" data from licensed firearms dealers that include information on the owner, firearm description, and serial number with every transaction involving a licensed firearms dealer as well as triggering state and federal buyer vetting. It should be a low cost process to transmit data to other government agencies. The actual deficiencies in the areas of registration and buyer vetting are a result of transactions that don't involve a dealer (gun shows, transactions between friends, etc.) and should be plugged.

I believe that mental health is the most urgent gun violence factor as well as the most complex to address. Even "ban everything" gun control legislation will not stop the maniac.

Investigations of mass-murder tragedies have revealed a common thread. Abnormal behavior observed while the perpetrators were attending school. Most schools have mental health professionals in their employ whose charge is to identify students in need of psychiatric services and to arrange for diagnosis and treatment. Many states including Connecticut have detailed flowchart-style action plans in place to address students with mental health issues. The students that need help aren't getting it. Just listen to statements made by teachers about shooting perpetrators that acknowledge they saw behavioral issues early on in little Johnny. If mental health services where provided nobody is saying so.

In Connecticut psychiatrists are required to notify the DCF if they believe a patient poses a danger to themselves or others… but they have to be in treatment for that to happen. The same notification requirement holds true for adult patients with Emergency Services being the notified organization Additional, even if troubled individuals were denied firearms by the vetting process, if they are determined to murder, they will find a way – we can only defend ourselves.

In closing, I suggest that you shouldn't ostracize the legally-armed citizen or make them the criminal. Instead, point the solution in the right direction. Now might be an excellent time to consider a Castle Doctrine, as public consensus finally appears to acknowledge the reality of gun violence occurring anywhere and the ferocity level of the armed criminal.

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