

On February 23, an unassuming law-abiding Fairfield resident snapped, threatened his girlfriend, and then fatally shot himself. It was reported that he also happened to be the owner of an assault-style weapon. It's hard to say how close this came to another mass shooting, but it wouldn't be a stretch to say the public was lucky enough to have literally dodged a bullet this time.

It also wouldn't be a stretch to connect this incident to the heated debate on gun violence in Connecticut in which you hear this NRA-inspired refrain repeated ad infinitum from opponents of strict new gun safety laws -- "Law-abiding citizens are the ones who would be punished by tougher gun laws."

To the contrary, it should be obvious that the exact opposite is true. The concept of tougher sensible gun legislation is to make it very hard for anyone bent on violence to get their hands on an arsenal capable of mass killing, thereby not punishing but protecting the law-abiding public, our children, and law enforcement. It's impossible to predict if and when something might set off and snap a law-abiding citizen who has a hidden dark side, and turn them into a criminal or a mass murderer in an instant. It can happen, and it has happened, many times.

Exhibit "A": Up until December 14, 2012, the perpetrator of the Sandy Hook massacre was a law-abiding citizen. He was also a time-bomb quietly flying under the radar. And thanks to his reckless, enabling, law-abiding mother, with her in-home armory, and our current loophole-riddled gun regulations, he was able to easily get his hands on a legally-owned arsenal which allowed him to act out his murderous rampage. And yet, he and his mother were both indeed law-abiding citizens.

And so I'd ask opponents of sensible gun regulations who object on the grounds that law-abiding citizens would be punished -- Can you connect the dots? When there's a chance of reducing the possibility, why would you be willing to gamble that you, your family or your friends, won't be in the wrong place at the wrong time when some law-abiding citizen with undetected bottled-up madness, easily acquires an arsenal capable of mass killing, and becomes a crazed gunman at a school playground, a place of business, a public space, a mall, a movie theater, or a college campus?

That's why tougher common sense gun safety laws that restrict the availability of weapons meant for mass killing to the military and law enforcement are needed. That's precisely why we need to re-visit and tighten up current laws and enact new ones, while at the same time preserving the Second Amendment right of citizens to bear arms for protecting their homes, families, businesses, and for shooting sports. That's why we need an assault weapons ban law that's not filled with loopholes and exceptions. That's why a ban on high-capacity magazines is needed. That's why ammunition purchases should not be unrestricted and should not go unmonitored. And that's why expanded universal background checks on all gun purchases are needed.

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