

I support the limitation on magazine size and the ban on assault weapons for the following reasons (not to mention registration, licensing & registration of all guns for the following reasons:

The Newtown, CT, massacre has dramatized the fact that guns are a public health issue as well as a constitutional rights issue. The impact of gun violence on children alone is stunning: Between 1979 and 2009, 116,335 children up to age 19 were killed by guns, 57% in homicides, 31% in suicides; almost 3 times the number of soldiers killed in Vietnam. Gun-related homicide & suicide are the 2nd & 3rd leading causes of death among youth age 15-24. In 2008-09 alone our over-all population suffered 61,289 deaths due to firearms, , and 145,390 non-fatal injuries. (www.cdc.gov) 5,740 of the killed were children, “the equivalent of 229 public school classrooms with 25 children each.” (www.childrensdefense.org)

The use of the word “epidemic” (normally employed in public health contexts) with respect to death by gunfire is no exaggeration. Contributing to this epidemic is the Supreme Court’s recent affirmation of a fundamentalist interpretation of the 2nd Amendment – by a 5-to-4 vote. The narrow margin reflects the erosion of balance in interpretation. The 18th century rationale for the 2nd Amendment did indeed balance protection of individual rights with a consideration of the public good. Its language specifically linked “the right of the people to keep and bear arms” to the need for “a well-regulated militia” to assure “the security of a free state.” At that time, without a standing army, the nation had just won its freedom from a foreign power. The only guns were single shot. We were still a frontier society; guns were needed for self-protection and food in a way that does not mirror today’s reality. Our forefathers (no women involved in the securing of gun rights then) could not have imagined assault rifles any more than they could the density of population today. What they did understand and honor – more clearly than today’s Supreme Court majority – was the concept of “commonweal.” A fundamentalist interpretation of the 2nd amendment in 2013 abandons that commonweal, placing all value on individual rights, and none on a responsibility for public health and well-being.

This situation does not mean that duly vetted and licensed individuals should not own certain kinds of guns. It does mean that we as a nation need to understand fully the traumatic, physical, and yes, even financial impact of the disproportionate right to gun ownership as we consider gun control.

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