

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee,
My name is Chris Lemos and I am a resident of Stratford. I am also a certified firearms instructor.

I am writing in opposition of SB00650 and HB06848.

While I share in your desire to protect people from domestic violence (or any violence, for that matter), these two bills go about it in a wrong, and unconstitutional way.

As a firearms instructor certified to provide the training the State requires for a permit to own or carry a firearm, I've met many victims and potential victims of domestic violence. A common thread among these students is a desire to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Despite any personal feelings one may have about firearms, the fact remains that at this time a firearm is the single most effective force equalizer available, which is why they are used by virtually all law enforcement officers. There is simply no other item, or training that can give a person (such as a 115lb woman or a frail senior citizen) such an effective advantage against a larger, stronger attacker in a violent confrontation.

While these two bills attempt to prevent an attacker from using a firearm, they also may be used to first disarm a victim; leaving them defenseless and vulnerable. Were these bills to become law, it would be simple for an abuser who knows or suspects their intended target owns a firearm to use this law to deprive a victim of both legally owned property (a firearm) and a constitutionally protected right (the use of said firearm for self defense) without due process.

There are already combinations of state and federal laws on the books that allow for the removal of firearms if the courts or police feel it is justified. See:
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2014/rpt/pdf/2014-R-0181.pdf>

Finally, one must wonder what the actual goal here is. Isn't it to prevent or prevent domestic violence? Out of the 26 cases named in the 2013 and the 2014 Domestic Violence Fatality Review Reports, None of the reported deaths with firearms happened while under a 14 day temporary restraining order, but these laws may actually cause future deaths by depriving the victim the means to defend her life. See:
<http://www.ctcadv.org/files/2913/8145/2606/2013DVFRCreport.pdf>
http://www.ctcadv.org/files/9614/0656/3514/2014_Fatality_Review_Report.pdf

Thank you for your service to the people of Connecticut, and for your time and consideration on this matter.

Chris Lemos
Stratford, CT