

Gentlemen,

I ask that you pass two bills having to do with gun safety: S. B. No. 20 An Act Concerning Carrying a Firearm While Intoxicated or Under the Influence of Alcohol, and H. B. 5408 An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit.

Following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School Wayne LaPierre of the NRA offered the now frequently referenced proposal that we need Good Guys with Guns to protect us and our children from Bad Guys with Guns. His theory of community safety was disturbingly simplistic. Surely the benefit, as opposed to the risk, to society of armed civilians must depend upon many factors including the psychological stability, the marksmanship, the training, the eyesight and the sobriety of the civilian gun owners. Perhaps the most important factor in safety is how armed civilians are integrated with professional law enforcement. It is essential that police officers be able to distinguish legitimate armed citizens from armed terrorists and criminals in order to prevent panic and "friendly fire" shootings.

At least Mr. LaPierre's remarks purported to show respect for our police. It appeared that he was promoting the concept of civilian gun owners acting as an adjunctive or ancillary police force. It is absolutely infuriating that there have been recent cases in Connecticut of gun owners taunting police officers and refusing to show their carry permits. Where is the cooperation and respect our police need and deserve?

Not only should gun owners be required to present their carry permits when asked but Connecticut needs to urgently develop a plan as to how, in an active shooting situation, police can distinguish the active shooter from other armed civilians.

As far as sobriety is concerned, NRA safety guidelines state, "Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting." The guidelines are unequivocal. Not only should S.B. No. 20 be passed but gun rights organizations should be encouraged to promote stringent guidelines for gun safety. Reasonable safety guidelines should state, "Guns should be left secured at home if alcohol has, or will be, consumed." Period .

As legislators you should not have to micromanage gun safety in our state. Unfortunately you must do what gun rights organizations have not been willing to do.

Thank you,

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While it is not germane to the legislation being considered today, I am enclosing an article I published on the challenges of treating gun violence as a mental health issue. While the article was written for physicians I believe some of the discussion would be relevant to legislative efforts to control gun violence.