

March 11, 2019

Marty Isaac, Board Chair, Connecticut Against Gun Violence. Trumbull CT

Chairman and Members of the CT Judiciary Committee, my name is Marty Isaac, and I am Board Chair, Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

I am here today to speak in support of

- H.B. 7223: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles
- H.B. 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home
- H.B. 7219: An Act Concerning Ghost Guns
- S.B. 60: An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit

Because my time is limited, I will speak to the Safe Storage bills; my written testimony will include testimony on the other two bills.

Before I do so however, I would like to thank you for all you have done over the past number of years to improve gun safety in our state. It is especially satisfying to me that the legislation passed here in Hartford has been on a bipartisan basis. Your actions have saved lives. Connecticut has one of the lowest gun death rates in the country. Yet sadly, our work is not done.

The testimony regarding the death of Ethan Song is haunting. How can it be, after all the tragedy we have experienced in Connecticut, that it remains permissible to leave guns unsecured in the presence of children.

These horrific events that follow lax storage practices are not “accidents.” They are foreseeable acts based on owner negligence.

It’s an awesome responsibility to own a firearm. And while I believe the overwhelming majority are responsible gun owners, I also believe we need to be far more aggressive with how we deal with irresponsible gun owners.

Thankfully, this topic appears to be one we can all rally behind:

- The NSSF states: When not in use, firearms and ammunition should be secured in a safe place, separate from each other. It is your responsibility to prevent children and unauthorized adults from gaining access to firearms or ammunition.
<https://www.nssf.org/safety/rules-firearms-safety/>
- The NRA: Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons. <https://gunsafetyrules.nra.org/>

Less foreseeable, but more devastating – stolen guns.

NBC CT recently researched this topic and found that thousands of guns stolen from communities including Cheshire, Bloomfield and Glastonbury, are turning up at crime scenes throughout the state and country.

- Frank Occhipinti, deputy chief of the firearms operations division for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. “The impact of gun theft is quite clear, it is devastating our communities.”
- Larry Keane, senior vice president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation “There are more guns stolen every year than there are violent crimes committed with firearms. Gun owners should be aware of the issue.”

And I would add, so should all of you, our legislators.

Yes, of course, we need to punish the criminals that do the stealing.

However, if we are going to reduce the number of stolen guns making their way to our cities, gun owners need to do a better job of securing their firearms – at home and in their vehicles.

Therefore, I respectfully request you support

- H.B. 7223: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles
- H.B. 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home

Regarding HB 7219: An Act Concerning Ghost Guns

This bill proposes to ban guns sold without serial numbers, that bypass the background check system and to regulate do-it yourself kits and 3D printed guns.

This is no idle threat; it turns out the parts to make ghost guns are easily accessible to the Connecticut populace on such websites as ghostguns.com, ghostrifles.com and ghostgunner.net. The Ghostgunner website copy on the home page states: “No registration or serialization required.”

Ghost guns are a threat to public safety and enable citizens to easily bypass our laws. As it turns out, not surprisingly, ghost guns have been used in mass shootings and attacks on law enforcement around the country.

This past February, a U.S. Coast Guard lieutenant was arrested in Maryland who federal authorities say was planning a domestic terrorist attack had

amassed an arsenal of firearms and gun components used to fabricate untraceable home-built weapons. Among the more than a dozen firearms and ammunition in the Maryland home of Lt. Christopher Paul Hasson, investigators said he also purchased machined components that make up the body of an AR-15-style rifle and other guns.

There is no valid reason for anyone to possess unregistered, untraceable firearms. Connecticut should regulate these weapons and the buying and selling of firearm kits.

Regarding SB 60: An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit:

Presently, police can only ask to see carry permits IF there is reasonable suspicion of a crime. A 2015 case in Colorado illustrates the problem: A 33-year-old man, Noah Harpham, was walking down a public street in Colorado Springs, with an open carry firearm. Naomi Bettis, a neighbor to Mr. Harpham, called 911. No action was taken. The 911 dispatcher explained to Ms. Bettis that Colorado allows the public handling of firearms. Noah Harpham went on to kill three people.

When police see an armed person in public, how should they know if it is an emergency, or not? As stated by a spokeswoman for the local Sheriff's Office in Colorado Springs: "Is this person exercising their rights or about to start a very serious situation in which someone is going to be killed?" "We just don't know the difference."

That is why the "reasonable suspicion of a crime" standard, in my opinion, doesn't adequately protect the public. We need to give police officers the tools to do their job.

By not acting, this body will effectively give permission and enable anyone, to be anywhere in public with an openly carried firearm, with the knowledge and comfort that police will not approach them.

Think about that; by not acting, you will enable law abiding citizens and criminals (because you can't tell the difference) to openly carry firearms outside schools, outside churches, outside malls and outside even your own house.

Let's also be clear about one other point – carrying a firearm without a permit is a felony. It is a serious crime that should be enforced, but can't be, if the officer can't ask to see the permit.

That can't be the policy that this esteemed body wants to promote.

In summary, on behalf of CT Against Gun Violence and our 100,000+ supporters, please support:

- H.B. 7223: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles
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