I am in absolute opposition to the proposed 35% tax on ammunition. This is nothing other than thinly disguised gun control proposed by those who do not like gun owners and want to punish them. Vote NO on this outrageous proposal.

I am a retired Police Sergeant with 33 years of service and former Team Leader of a regional municipal S.W.A.T. Team. I served my time, risked my life and shed my blood. I was decorated for bravery. My reward for this service is to be treated like a criminal by Connecticut's gun laws. Like every Law Enforcement Officer in history, I was threatened with violence against myself and my family by people I arrested and sent to prison. I have a right to protect myself and my family from these threats and from the criminals and terrorists that are in this country in ever increasing numbers. I'm not surrounded by the State Capitol Police like legislators are and am not protected by State Police 24/7 like the Governor. If I need the police I have to call them and, until they arrive, which could be a long time, I am on my own. When seconds count, the police are minutes away. That is absolutely true and I earned the right to say it. I am a legal gun owner and the amount of gun violence that I cause in society is ZERO.

I work as a firearms instructor at a CT gun store and shooting range, giving lessons to people who want to improve their knowledge and skill with firearms. Students almost invariably tell me two things. The first is that they feel they need a firearm to protect themselves and their loved ones. They know the police will respond and investigate, but that the police can't protect them or prevent crimes from happening. The second is, "I hope I never need to use a gun for protection, but if I do need to use it, I want to know how." Safety and skill with firearms all comes down to proper training and practice. Whether it is the police, the military or gun owners, there is only so much money in the training budget. When we want our police and military to be skilled and safe with weapons, we don't accomplish that by reducing their training. We shouldn't do it with gun owners either, but that is the effect that an increased tax on ammunition will have. When there is a limited amount of training money available and a tax takes 35% of it, training, safety and skill are going to be reduced. Gun owners who invest in advanced training learn more than just how to hit a target, much more. They learn about situational awareness, how to recognize and avoid potential threats and critical decision-making and gun handling skills under stress. A well trained and experienced gun owner who is confident in their skills and abilities is less likely to have to resort to actually using a firearm. We should be encouraging and promoting advanced training, not pricing it out of reach.

Legal gun owners are generally extremely law-abiding people. When people are arrested for gun-related crimes in CT they are very frequently also charged with criminal possession of a firearm, meaning they are not a legal gun owner and should not have had a gun in the first place. Legal gun owners are not the cause of the vast majority of gun violence and we should not be punished for it.

People are going to legally own and carry guns in CT, that is a fact of life. We want them to do it with as much knowledge, skill and safety as possible. Increasing the tax
on ammunition will have the opposite effect, reducing the amount of critically needed training that the average gun owner can afford.

Vote NO on HB 5040.

Kevin Fleming
Tolland CT