My name is John Westlake, Sergeant First Class, United States Army, Retired 1977-1998

I am in STRONG opposition to Proposed Bill number 5040 for the following reasons:

Per the CDC, Connecticut is the 6th safest state in the country concerning firearm homicides. During 2018, 186 residents were killed by firearms of a population of 3.5 million. More pedestrians are killed in crosswalks in this state than by guns. This is a fabricated crisis.

The state already provides $500,000 in taxpayer dollars to Project Longevity. A community-based program that has already reduced gun violence in CT’s larger cities.

Residents of the State of Connecticut have "had it" with taxes. PERIOD.

Rather than target the criminal perpetrators of gun violence, this bill targets the law-abiding residents who have already paid elevated fees in order to obtain a permit to purchase ammunition. This bill punishes the wrong people. A better approach would be to collect monies from those who commit firearm violence, say $500 per event. That would also act as a deterrent. As written this is a sin tax, which is regressive, discriminates against law-abiding citizens, and will actually result in more crime such as black market and smuggling activities. These crimes may ultimately cause an increase in gun violence.

3 cities within the state account for the majority of gun violence. If you were to take their stats away, CT would be the safest state in the country. Within these cities, these crimes are committed by a particular demographic. THIS IS A CITY ISSUE, not a state one. There is not a statewide gun violence crisis. If the mayor, public safety commissioner or police chief is unable to get the situation under control, fire them and find one that will. It's unfair to burden the rest of the state’s residents due to poor leadership within certain municipalities. Lead, follow or get out of the way.

The Bill itself is poorly written. It mentions funding gun violence prevention efforts but fails to mention any by name. To our knowledge, the money will go to the state employee pension fund. The term "first sale"is used. This term refers to imported goods only. As written, only imported ammo will be taxes this way? The term "excise tax" is used. It should read “ad Valorem excise tax, as it taxes a % of the cost of individual rounds, as opposed to per unit excise tax which taxes each round, rather than the %.

Please lean on the criminals who commit these crimes - not the thousands of law-abiding citizens who will never commit these crimes.

Thank you,

John Westlake
Coventry