

Hello,

My name is Gregg Jones-Henry. I am a resident of Coventry, CT. I was and still am absolutely horrified at the Sandy Hook Shooting. It was more than a shooting, it was literally a massacre. It hit me, like most residents here in Connecticut especially hard compared to the rest of the country. I have two school age daughters, a 7 year old in grammar school, and an 11 year old in middle school. When the first news broke of a school shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut, my heart sank, initially not knowing what school or what town it had occurred in. A short time later, when I learned it was in Newtown, there was a slight sense of relief, as my children were safely in school on the other side of the state. But as the details unfolded throughout the day, my heart wept for the families of those children of Newtown. We absolutely need to prevent such a horrible act from occurring again in this state and this country. I understand that there are no easy solutions. There are no foolproof fixes. There are no new laws and no one action that can be taken that will guaranty the next Sandy Hook will not occur.

I thoroughly believe that we need to look at all of our options very, very carefully in order to do what will actually work. Taking a “knee-jerk” reaction, even if it makes the citizens and legislators of Connecticut feel good, feel like we have “done something”, is wrong if common sense shows that it has little if any chance of working or if history shows that it was tried and failed in the past. We need to fix this problem once and for all now.....we cannot afford to pass a bunch of “feel-good” laws, knowing that they will do little if anything, only to have to revisit this issue after the next mass killing. Don’t we all want to do something that will actually work? Why set ourselves up for failure, by doing something that gives us a false sense of security, but in reality, provides no security at all.

Let’s look at some of the main proposals that have been voiced over the last few weeks, in order of the most effective to the least effective:

1. **PROPOSAL:** Put armed police or other trained security in the schools, along with a robust security plan to have only one point of entry (front door), and a lock down alarm system which can be activated from any classroom or hallway.

**LIKELY RESULT:** Just knowing that armed police or security officers are in every elementary, middle and high school in the state will likely prevent future attacks. Scientific profiling of past school shooters show that they specifically pick “soft targets”, that is targets that will offer them little if any resistance. Somebody shooting back at them is resistance. An unarmed elementary school is the softest of all targets. Ninety percent of the people at such a school are under 10 years of age, and the majority of the remaining ten percent are unarmed female teachers. By adding even a single armed guard at each school turns what was the softest of all targets into a secure facility. The next school shooter wants one thing. He wants to rack up a body count higher than Sandy Hook. He is not going to pick a target that has a high chance that he will be stopped before he can even get started or achieve his goal. In the event that a shooter still picks a school to carry out his attack, chances are very high that he would be confronted and stopped at the main entrance (assuming that is where the armed guard is stationed) as it is his only path into the school (part of this plan includes locking all other doors – the only way in or out is the front door). In the event that the attacker made it into a different door and into a classroom, the lock-down alarm would be sounded by the teacher or students and if that did not occur, the first

shot would be enough to bring the armed security officer running toward the sound of the shot. Chances are that he would be on scene in less than 1 minute at all but the largest schools in the state. This would put an end to the killing of the students/faculty just as the rampage got started.

**TIME TO IMPLEMENT AND COST:** Can be implemented almost immediately. A matter of a couple of weeks may be needed to schedule local or state police officers until a permanent plan can be worked to either use off-duty police officers (working a “detail” just as they do for road work or other functions that hire uniformed officers) or the services of a private armed security company. There would certainly be a cost, but it is something that could be managed. Local, state and federal funds can be diverted from other less critical programs to school safety. What other possible government funded program would be more deserving of the needed funds than protecting our children’s lives. Divert funds from that proposed new library, from that bus-way, from the next “bridge-to-nowhere” or from any other non-critical programs.

2. **PROPOSAL:** No armed guards, but fortify schools to prevent entry from an attacker. Install automatic locking doors with robust, motorized, remotely controlled dead bolts, bullet-proof glass in at least in the lobby/foyer areas, and security cameras in all classrooms and common areas. A high tech “lock-down” alarm system, which can be activated from within any classroom, office or common areas. Students will be trained how to activate the alarm themselves and what to do in the event that the alarm sounds. The front lobby/foyer will utilize a double door system, where the first door is normally left unlocked. Once a visitor enters the first door, it closes and locks behind them, and a school official needs to authorize the visitor to enter the school and will unlock the second door remotely after making visual contact (either in person or via video camera) with the visitor. All classrooms will have locking doors, which will close and lock automatically upon the alarm being activated, much like fire-screen doors do today. Teachers would have the ability to unlock the door to a classroom if needed, say to let in a child that was in the hall when the alarm sounded. The halls would have automatic doors periodically that would also close automatically. This would contain the attacker in one area, and not allow free roam of the whole school. The lock-down alarm would automatically sound at the police station, and possibly even the police dispatch center would have the ability to see live video feeds from the school security cameras. The information gained by the camera could be used in real time to relay to responding officers where in the school the attacker is, what type of weapon is being used, and other valuable information.

**LIKELY RESULT:** Fortifying schools, at least to a modest degree, will go a long way to prevent an attacker from entering the school, or in the case where an attacker did gain entry, would limit his access to children once in the school. Schools do not need to be made into “prisons” to make them significantly more secure than they are today. This type of infrastructure upgrades can have a direct, tangible effect. Attackers would be dissuaded from choosing a school as their target in the first place, as they know that it would not be easy to gain access to the school, and in the event that they did gain access, it would be very difficult to freely roam the school and find victims.

**TIME TO IMPLEMENT AND COST:** Time to implement would be at least many months if not a year or two. Detailed plans would be required for each school, and construction/installation would need to be funded and scheduled. Cost is high. This sort of infrastructure improvements

would be expensive, likely far more expensive than adding armed officers. The cost would likely be millions of dollars per school, instead of \$60,000 per school (per year) as it could be for adding armed security.

3. **PROPOSAL:** Train and equip school faculty to use firearms to protect the students. Purchase AR-15 style “patrol rifles” for each school, and secure them in various locations throughout the school, in hidden, built-in gun safes. These safes would be out of sight from students. They may be in administrator offices, storage closets, or other areas hidden from sight. Train select faculty/teachers (volunteer basis) to carry their own concealed handguns while on school property, and train them in the use of the AR-15 patrol rifles. Students nor the public would know how many or which faculty members were trained and armed.

**LIKELY RESULT:** As with the first two proposals above, just the fact that the public is aware that there are security measures (armed faculty), will likely dissuade an attacker from selecting the school in the first place as it is no longer a soft target. In the event that an attacker still chooses to attack the school, the trained faculty will engage the attacker upon the first sign of a deadly attack, stopping it before it gets started or, worst case, in the very early moments of an attack. There would be no obvious security in place. No faculty would be visibly armed. Faculty would be trained on tactics and on when to draw and when not to draw a weapon.

**TIME TO IMPLEMENT AND COST:** Time to implement would be minimal. In a matter of a few weeks to a couple of months, you could have a number of volunteer faculty members trained. Costs would be minimal, as the only expense would be training, and if the AR-15 option chosen, the cost of the rifles and hidden safes.

4. **PROPOSAL:** Attempt to prevent firearms from getting into the wrong hands in the first place by passing sweeping new gun laws that would restrict certain “assault weapons”, mandate magazine capacity restrictions for rifles and handguns, mandate new background check requirements and possibly even confiscate all existing firearms that statewide that fall outside of the new regulations.

**LIKELY RESULT:** As history has proven, new restrictive gun laws will not prevent such an attack. The Columbine school shooting took place 5 years into the national assault weapons ban, as did a number of other high profile school shootings such as in Pearl, MS and Paducah, KY. With the U.S. having an estimated 200-300 million firearms, it is impossible to confiscate them all or certain makes and model guns. The significant number of firearm owners would not turn in their guns. Even if every gun made illegal by new firearm laws was turned in and destroyed, we would likely see a black market emerge almost overnight to provide a steady supply of firearms for the criminals who sought them. Just as Prohibition did little to prevent the manufacture, sale or consumption of alcohol during the 1920’s, and just as cocaine, heroin and other currently illegal narcotics are readily available today in every city and town in America, new legislation to restrict the availability of certain types of firearms will do nothing to stop the criminals from finding them. It will only take them away from the law abiding citizens that have no intention to commit mass murder.

**TIME TO IMPLEMENT AND COST:** Time to implement could be almost immediate, although it would take a significant amount of time to confiscate even a small percentage of the firearms already in the hands of millions of Americans. The cost to local, state and federal agencies to enforce these new laws, investigate reports of citizens still owning outlawed guns, the cost to confiscate and destroy millions and millions of AR-15 and similar guns would be astronomical. It is estimated that over 1 million AR-15's have been legally sold just in the last 6 months alone. There are not enough police officers or federal agents that could possibly do the leg work to track them all down. The paperwork and red tape required to maintain databases would require hundreds of millions of dollars in new computer servers and personnel to maintain the databases. The bottom line is that this would be a very expensive undertaking, with zero chance of working. A database of firearm owners is useless too. Recently, Canada, which has maintained a firearms database since 1991 has done away with most of it due to cost overruns and no reduction in firearms related crime, and no assistance in solving any firearms related crimes. Originally estimated to cost only \$2 million a year to maintain quickly swelled to over \$66 million to maintain. And that is for a country with far fewer citizens and firearms than the U.S. has. Conservative estimates to start-up and maintain any firearms registry would easily top hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

Let's break down the main components of any possible new firearms laws and see if they would have prevented the Newtown massacre. First of all, the definition of an assault rifle says that "it is a selective fire (selective between fully automatic, semi-automatic, and burst fire) rifle that uses an intermediate cartridge and a detachable magazine". The AR-15 rifles sold in the U.S. to private citizens ARE NOT select fire rifles. They are simple semi-automatic rifles. They cannot be set to full automatic nor 3-round burst. Semi-automatic means that one bullet is fired for each pull of the trigger, just like all handguns do today. Most police departments have AR-15 rifles in officers cars. They call them a "patrol rifle". They do not call them an "assault rifle", because they are not an assault rifle. Although they look similar to military M-16 and M4 assault rifles, they are not. The best analogy is to say that the AR-15 is to an assault rifle, as a virgin strawberry daiquiri is to a full strength daiquiri. Just because it appears to be similar from the outside, it doesn't mean that it is. The "AR" in the name AR-15 does not stand for "Assault Rifle". The AR stands for ArmaLite, the company that originally designed the rifle back in the 1950's. All of ArmaLite's firearms, including bolt action rifles, handguns and shotguns contained "AR" in the name. For example, the AR-1 and AR-5 were both bolt action rifles.

**PROHIBITING/RESTRICTING THE AR-15 RIFLE:** The AR-15 rifle is the most popular rifle in America. It is considered a sporting rifle, and it is used for home defense, target practice, plinking (just having fun shooting inanimate objects like tin cans), varmint control, competitive shooting and hunting. The AR-15 has been sold to civilians in the U.S. since 1963. More AR-15 rifles have been sold in the U.S. during this time

than all other model rifles combined. Currently, over 30 different companies manufacture AR-15 rifles in the U.S.

Although the Newtown attacker did steal the AR-15 rifle from his own mother, and one could argue that if the AR-15 was outlawed at the time, and the mother didn't have the rifle, that the crime would not have occurred. That line of thinking is naive at best and reckless at worst. That is no different than saying that the drunk driver who drove his black SUV head-on into a family of 5, killing them all, would not have committed that crime if black SUV's were outlawed. If black SUV's were outlawed, he simply would have been driving a different color or type of automobile. If AR-15's were outlawed, the attacker most likely simply would have committed the attack with any one of the other firearms that were legal at the time, such as the pistols, other rifles or shotguns that were in the home.

The Columbine High School shooting that took place in 1999 didn't involve an AR-15, nor did the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, nor did the Tucson shooting in 2011. This alone absolutely proves beyond a doubt that by outlawing the AR-15 or similar rifles, will not prevent school shootings. Period. Since most (over 95%!) of school shootings that have occurred in the U.S. in the last 50 years using other model firearms, proves without a doubt that by outlawing AR-15 rifles will not prevent a school shooting from occurring. To arbitrarily select a certain model firearms based upon visual features such as color or the general aesthetic design, and outlaw those firearms will do absolutely nothing to prevent any violence, and it will only provide a very false and very short lived sense of security to our society. That false security will be dashed the first time that a school shooting occurs with an AR-15 that was acquired illegally, or with a different firearm altogether, proving that even with a ban in effect, school shootings will continue to take place.

Ask yourself these simple questions:

- 1. Is our goal to stop school shootings with AR-15 rifles, or is our goal to stop all school shootings?** Obviously, we want to stop all school shootings. So why would we waste any time singling out the AR-15?
- 2. Would you feel better if a school shooting occurred with a different model firearm?** Obviously, no. Regardless of what type of weapon was used, no one is going to feel better if a different type of weapon was used. The key factor that makes one school shooting worse than another is not the model of firearm used, but how many victims were injured or killed.
- 3. Would you feel better if the attacker fired 100 rounds by swapping a 10 round magazine 10 times, or by swapping a 20 round magazine 5 times, or by swapping a 30 round magazine 4 times?** Of course not. It takes less than 2 seconds for the average shooter to swap an AR-15 magazine. An expert can do it in half that time. By making 20 and 30 round magazines illegal, and requiring all magazines to be 10 rounds or less will not stop school shootings. Are we sending the message that its ok to shoot 10 children, just not 20 or 30 children? There are literally millions of 30 round AR-15 magazines all over the U.S. Even by outlawing them tomorrow, will not prevent a criminal from using one in a mass murder. If somebody is willing to break the law to commit murder, why do you honestly think that they will abide by the law to only use a 10 round magazine?

4. **Is my life any less valuable than that of a police officer's life?** Of course not. Then why would police officers still be allowed to possess AR-15 patrol rifles with 30 round magazines, but I can not? If a police officer goes up against a gunman and chooses to use the best weapon he has at his disposal at the time, the AR-15, and he has the "luxury" of 30 rounds at his fingertips to protect himself and others, why should I not have that same right, if I am trying to protect myself or family from a deadly threat?
5. **Why would anybody want to own an AR-15?** A gun is a rifle. Any handgun is simply a sub-par weapon that must be used when a rifle is not accessible or practical. If we are talking home defense, why are shotguns so popular? It is because they offer more firepower than a handgun. Period. The AR-15 is more accurate because it is easier to aim than a handgun. It is more powerful than a handgun, meaning that it has a greater chance of stopping a threat with a hit than a handgun. Most perpetrators who are shot with a handgun while breaking into a home flee the house, drive away, and either die a significant distance from where the crime took place, or they drive themselves to the hospital to get treated. Handguns have very little "stopping power". Much of the time, the bad guy chooses to continue the attack even after being shot multiple times with a handgun instead of turning and fleeing. The AR-15 or any rifle has a better chance of stopping the assailant in his tracks than a handgun. And lastly, when an intruder breaks into your home at 3am, do you want a "fair fight", or do you want to have overwhelming force in YOUR favor? If he has a knife, I want a gun. If he has a gun, I want a rifle. If he has a rifle with a 30 round magazine, I want a rifle with at least a 30 round magazine. Other than home protection, AR-15 rifles are just plain fun to shoot. They are excellent hunting rifles for small to medium game (believe it or not, the rifle is not quite powerful enough for most large game, as the round it shoots, the .223, is among the least powerful rifle rounds). And thousands of American citizens use AR-15 rifles in "3-gun" competitive shooting sports.
6. **Why does anyone "need" an "assault rifle"?** First of all, as stated above, the AR-15 is NOT an assault rifle, no matter how much the media and the uninformed report or think that it is. It is simply a semi-automatic rifle, like most other modern rifles used for hunting, target practice or home defense. Just because it is painted black does not make it an assault rifle. And as for "need", this is America! We are free to own and possess items not just because we "need" them, but also because we like them, or we want them. Do you really "need" that Cadillac or Mercedes? Do you really need that \$500 watch? Do you really need those \$150 pair of shoes? Did you really need to spend \$500 to take your family to a baseball game? Do you really need to order that steak when you go out for dinner? Do you really need that \$350,000, four-bedroom, 2.5 bath house? Do you really need 4 TV's in the house? What right does anybody else have to criticize me for the model of rifle I chose to purchase? Even if it was used by a criminal in a crime, and regardless of how heinous that crime was, that does not mean that it is ok to outlaw an item that is also used legally by millions of Americans. No one knows exactly how many AR-15's are in American homes right now. Some say in excess of 10 million. For the sake of being conservative, let's say that there are only 5 million. Even if 10 mass shootings were to take place this year alone, that is only .000002% of AR-15's used in such shootings. We both know the percentage is actually much, much less, as we are pretty confident that there are more than 5 million AR-15's out there, and we know that there are far less than 10 mass shootings a year with AR-15's. So we are going to punish 99.999998% of the law abiding AR-15 owners for the actions of .000002%? If we used that rational, ALL firearms, ALL knives, ALL cars, ALL baseball bats, ALL bricks, ALL rope and every human being should be in jail because all of these things have been used to commit murder at much higher percentages than the AR-15 rifle. Every year,

over 12,000 Americans are killed by drunk drivers! Why don't we outlaw cars! 12 thousand people are killed every year by criminally drunk drivers, and yet we have not outlawed cars yet? Why not?

I think that it is pretty clear that if we were serious about doing our best to prevent school shootings, we would focus on the changes that we can make that would likely prevent all school shootings, not only those committed with an AR-15. Let's do the RIGHT thing, and pass legislation that will provide REAL security for our children. Pass a bill that would allow for armed guards in our schools, and don't waste time passing a feel good measure that we know will do nothing but anger a large percentage of the democrat and republic voters, and not make a single child any safer. Don't waste time limiting the capacity of magazines. The bad guy will not lose a minute of sleep worrying about using an illegal 30 round magazine for his planned mass murder. And while you're at it, repeal the "gun free school zone" laws. They do nothing but make victim zones. The bad guy who is set on murdering people at a school will not be persuaded to change his plans because there is a law that guns are not allowed in school property. If anything, it puts the school in more danger, because the bad guys knows that schools are soft targets, as there is no chance that a concealed pistol permit holder is on school property, and could stop him.

In listening to the media over the last month, you would think that guns are the most evil items ever invented. That couldn't be further from the truth. The criminal is the evil one. The gun is just a tool, that like any tool, can be used for good, or if in the wrong hands, for evil. It is the gun that was the tool that gave America our freedom back in 1776. We have all heard the saying "God made man, but Sam Colt made man equal". The gun in the hands of the weak of our society gives them a chance to protect themselves. Guns have saved most of Europe from the Germans twice. Guns have saved the lives of countless police officers. Guns have saved the lives of countless private citizens. Without guns in the hands of the law-abiding citizen, this country would be overrun by gang members and common criminals. Without guns in the hands of law-abiding homeowners and business owners, there would be nothing to prevent a criminal from just walking into someone's house or place of business anytime they want, to take anything they want, knowing that there is nothing that could be done to stop them.

Don't take away the right of self-defense by the common citizen, in the failed name of school safety. Do the right thing.....protect our children without unprotecting our citizens.

Gregg Jones-Henry