

Dear Task Force Members,

Little more than a month ago, we witnessed a terrible atrocity -- the killing of 20 children and six adults in Newtown. I still stay awake at night in tears thinking of the fear and suffering of the victims and the tremendous loss and grief of their families. Perhaps it is because I reside just 10 miles away -- Newtown's my "back yard" and because I can relate demographically to the victims that I am so strongly affected. But as horrendous as this event is, it is just one example in a long litany of deaths by guns in our state and in our nation as a whole, not the least of which is the appalling toll of killings by guns deaths in our cities every day.

While this problem is complex and needs to be addressed on many levels, including serious scrutiny of and change in mental health services and the widespread acceptance of a culture of violence and death in the entertainment industry (movies, tv, video games) as well as the media, the singular most effective and immediate remedy is to keep dangerous guns off our streets and out of dangerous hands.

We are the only major country that allows possession of semi-automatic assault-like weapons and while we regulate many facets of American life -- cars, medicines, toys -- we do not regulate these killing machines. And what is behind this? Lobbying and self-interest groups that support gun manufacturers -- the same industry that is willing to sell powerful arsenals of weaponry for profit under the guise of protection from tyrannical governments, terrorists and the like. More than 900 people have been killed by guns since the Newtown massacre. In an average year, 30,000 die of gunshot wounds; another 60,000 are wounded.

Take action now to protect public health and safety and end gun violence! Adopt urgently needed proposals to

- Ban the sale and ownership of semi-automatic assault weapons and high-capacity magazines
- Fix our broken background check system and require a background check for ALL gun sales
- Make gun trafficking a crime with tough penalties for offenders
- Fund public research on gun violence and gun crime that will make law enforcement more efficient and effective
- Mandate gun violence a program area of appropriate Connecticut agencies (e.g. OPM, Health, Child Advocate) with annual reporting
- Require gun owners like car owners to carry liability insurance
- Require production of a relevant gun registration to purchase ammunition

So when will it be enough? I say enough is now! We can't take any more. How many more will be harmed or die by guns before we stand up and take action. Look into the eyes of your children or any child; look into the eyes of your loved ones or anyone who just like you would suffer the pain of a bullet or loss of life. Look deeply into your hearts and take the right action now to prevent more acts of senseless, needless violence. We have an obligation to do what we can to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening over and over again. What kind of legacy do

we want to leave our children and future generations – a nation where the potential for violence and death in the school, in the church, the mall, any public place or private home in any community at any time is the norm, or a nation where all of us despite our different viewpoints, can live, work and play in an atmosphere of safety, mutual respect and regard for the welfare of all.

Most sincerely,

Susan Wall Oleyer, MPH

Oxford CT