

January 22, 2013

Dear Honorable Connecticut State Senators and Representatives of the School Safety Task Force Subgroup;

First of all, let us agree that all of us are deeply anguished by the deaths of 26 innocents that occurred on December 14, 2012 in Newtown. As a father of two older daughters and a grandfather of 6 and 7 year old granddaughters, this tragedy affected me personally as I watched on TV as it unfolded that fateful day. Newtown and Connecticut will never be the same after what happened on that date, a date that will reside in the minds of Connecticut residents much like 9/11 does. We all want to prevent a similar incident from ever occurring in our state or anywhere in the nation.

How do we protect our children right now, starting today, in a way that we know works? The only way to answer that question is to face up to the truth. Politicians pass more gun laws to add to the thousands already on the books and pass laws for Gun-Free School Zones. Businesses post the same signs. They issue press releases bragging about them. They post signs advertising them. And in so doing, they tell every insane killer in America that our schools are their safest place to inflict maximum mayhem with minimum risk.

How have our nation's priorities gotten so far out of order? Think about it. We care about our money, so we protect our banks with armed guards. American airports, office buildings, power plants, courthouses — even sports stadiums — are all protected by armed security. We protect the president and vice president with armed Secret Service agents. Members of Congress, Connecticut legislators and the governor work in offices surrounded by armed Capitol Police officers. Yet when it comes to the most beloved, innocent and vulnerable members of the American family — our children — we as a society leave them utterly defenseless, and the monsters and predators of this world know it and exploit it. That must change now!

As parents, we do everything we can to keep our children safe. It is now time for us to assume responsibility for their safety at school. The only way to stop a monster from killing our kids is to be personally involved and invested in a plan of absolute protection. *The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.* Would you rather have a 911 call bring a good guy with a gun from a mile away ... or from seconds away within a school?

So why is the idea that a gun is good when it's used to protect our president or our country or our police, but it's bad when it's used to protect our children in their schools? They're our kids. They're our responsibility. And it's not just our duty to protect them — it's our right to protect them.

Five years ago, after the Virginia Tech tragedy, when the NRA said we should put armed security in every school, the media called them crazy. In October 1998, President Clinton announced the COPS in Schools program. This program ultimately placed more than 6,500 armed police officers in schools before the program was cut in 2005. This type of program is a step in the right direction because *it takes a good police officer with a gun to stop a bad guy with a gun.* We must provide the same level of protection to our most precious resource, our children!

The budgets of our local police departments are strained and resources are limited, but their dedication and courage are second to none and they can be deployed right now. It's easy to pass an ordinance that costs nothing and tells bad guys to stay away from our schools: they're gun-free zones. But it **does** cost money that's well spent to put armed police officers in our schools, a small price to pay for security for our children, our most precious assets. If we truly cherish our kids more than our money or our celebrities, we must give them the greatest level of protection possible and the security that is only available with a properly trained and armed police officer.

And we must reinforce all entries to our schools with locking security vestibules that trap an intruder until police arrive to take him into custody, the same kind of vestibules used in banks to protect our money.

Sincerely,
Thomas R. Violante
New Haven, Connecticut

