

To members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group:

As a trauma surgeon working in New Haven, I am often confronted with the sequela of interpersonal violence. I therefore commend the group for attempting to tackle the difficult issue of violence in our society. However, as you proceed, I encourage you to consider a simple question. Are the proposals that you are considering actually going to reduce violence or do they simply sound good in a press release or satisfy a political agenda and/or your party leadership. After listening to some of the proposals circulated in the press seeking to eliminate certain types of firearms or limit the number of rounds in a magazine, proposals which do not actually address the underlying root causes of violence, I fear the answer is the latter.

The majority of Americans, including those who may exercise their right to bear arms, are caring, decent and law abiding. They do not commit violent crimes. Will restricting their rights, which are guaranteed by both our federal and state constitutions, reduce violence? Majority of the violence committed with or without firearms, is perpetrated by individuals who clearly do not respect laws since they ignore the existing ones against robbery, assault or even murder. In many cases, the firearms used are handguns, they are illegally obtained and use "standard" capacity magazines. They also occur in setting of another criminal activity including drug trafficking.

A firearm is an inanimate object. It is neither good or bad. The person wielding it determines whether it is used for good or evil.

When a drunk driver causes a fatal motor vehicle collision, we don't blame the alcohol, we rightly blame the driver who disobeyed the DUI laws. We also don't seek to limit alcohol use by responsible citizens who do so in moderation.

In addition to the evil acts that have spurred these proceedings, firearms are utilized for defensive purposes on a daily basis including a recent home invasion in Georgia where a mother protected herself and her two children by firing six shots. Even that barely stopped the intruder and caused him to leave the home. Consider what might have happened if she had a handgun that could fire only one round as Senator Meyer has currently proposed. Would we be mourning three innocent lives?

These are not isolated incidences. A review of the available literature by the National Academy of Science published in 2004 has identified that firearms are used for defensive purposes by **civilians** (not police) to prevent a number of crimes including bodily harm, rape, and murder anywhere from **100,000 to 2.5 million times a year**. How will laws, which will only affect the law-abiding citizens who choose to obey them, affect these statistics? Will you be able to tell these folks that their safety is irrelevant?

Instead of limiting rights of ordinary citizens, I urge you to tackle the harder issues that will make a difference.

- How do we stop criminals and the very small subset of people with mental illness that may have violent tendencies from obtaining access to firearms and stop them from committing crimes?
- How do we either successfully rehabilitate or lock away violent criminals and keep them off the street? Our current judicial system seems to have a revolving door for career criminals and even fails to enforce existing laws.
- How do we break the cycle of violence among the youth in our urban areas who are affected by this on a daily basis but do not make national headlines?
- How do we stop gang activity that often contributes to gun violence?

I also urge you to make sure that the actions you implement occur after a rational and objective analysis of facts including an understanding of firearms that is based on testimony from experts and not simply misinformation from the media. There has already been too much misinformation about capabilities of certain classes of firearms including what some describe as "assault" weapons. These firearms **are** used for hunting as well as sport competitions and are actually **less** powerful than many rifles which are not

under review.

Don't simply rush to do something. History is full of well intentioned but rushed efforts that end up as failures. Our great nation has a unique and rich history of preserving individual freedoms that are guaranteed by our federal as well as state constitutions. We need to do better to reduce the violence in our society. But let's get it done correctly. I am confident that with skilled leadership we can achieve such a goal.

Thank you for your attention

Sincerely,

Adrian Maung, MD