

Good Day Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Alexander Welford and for the first time in my life I find that it is necessary for me to speak out, rather than sit by and watch as things happen. As a recent graduate from University of Hartford, I was taught that when considering something that sources must be checked and determined to be verified and preferably impartial and unbiased, in addition to waiting until all of the facts are examined before coming to a conclusion. Before University I was taught through the Boy Scouts Of America, firearm safety among a myriad of other life lessons.

Before I begin I would like to express my condolences and state for the record, I am deeply sorry for the excessive number of deaths that are attributed to guns in this country, and the calls for something to be done **MUST** be heeded. To ignore this scourge and allow the violence to continue is not only foolish, but shameful. With that end goal in mind the number of bills that are being considered are well intentioned however misguided and will do **NOTHING** other than, turn ordinary law abiding citizens into criminals and waste taxpayer money to implement, with **NO** reduction in gun violence or even violent crime rates.

The style of bill that I see to examine is one that restricts gun rights and expands gun control or registration of firearms.

Rather than being just a voice and asking the government to strike these proposals down, I seek more. Something must indeed be done about the gun violence in this country, and there are reasonable proposals that many people agree with, people on both sides of the issue. These are stricter mental health examinations before purchasing, and to ease and eventually eliminate gun free zones. While at first my proposed solutions may seem counter productive in light that the theory of more guns=less crime is proven and that some people view guns as killing machines, but please allow "benefit of doubt" and listen with an open mind before drawing any conclusions.

First and foremost, I wish to establish that criminals, by definition, do not follow the law. If they did follow laws they would not be criminals, that is a simple fact. So we can conclude that criminals will break any laws that are set before them and that therefore laws are not a hindrance to crime. The only people that would follow the agenda that is being pushed here, are law following and law abiding citizens, as those people actually follow the laws.

Let me examine and rebut House Bill 5112, which seeks to make the names and addresses of pistol permit holders public. This is a danger to public safety, simply because if the locations of firearms are posted for all to see, criminals would be handed a list of homes in which someone possessed a fire arm. This has two logical outcomes, either criminals use this list to avoid the homes where guns are kept in favor of victimizing unarmed citizens (addresses and people not on the public list of pistol permit holders), The second outcome is that criminals target the listed addresses and seek to steal firearms to further their illegal activities. Neither of these outcomes is the desired effect of keeping Connecticut safer, with no actual benefits to the state and therefore I must oppose House Bill 5112, and any similar bills

For those of you who don't know, Senate Bill 122, If I may paraphrase, seeks to limit firearms to a single shot. Not only is this a thinly veiled attempt at gun grabbing, this is also a violation of the Connecticut state constitution as well as the federal constitution. This bill would greatly and negatively infringe upon the rights of citizens to defend themselves. The criminals would not follow this law, instead using it to prey upon the greatly weakened public. Without a deterrent to violent crime only the law breaking would have access to weapons that can fire more than one round. Imagine a world where criminals have weapons that are superior to those that citizens carry, in this world the citizens would be just sheep waiting for the wolves. This would also inspire the citizens to break the law on mass scale and turn thousands of law abiding shooters into instant felons. And for those reasons I must **STRONGLY** oppose Senate Bill 122 and any similar bills.

Senate bill 124 which seeks to limit the capacity of ammunition feeding devices (magazines) to ten rounds must be opposed as well. This bill would limit the ability of citizens to defend themselves against a violent threat, and therefore must be opposed. Citizens shall not be stripped of their rights to defend themselves, through the legislatures arbitrary designation of 10 rounds. What difference does the capacity of a magazine have when mags take less than a second to change? The difference between firing 30 rounds through one 30 round magazine, and 30 rounds through 3 ten round mags is mere seconds. If the government seeks to truly protect the innocent, a magazine limit will not solve anything, and just turn the law abiding into felons. For these reasons I must ask you to **STRONGLY** oppose any limits on magazine capacity.

Senate Bill 140 is a bill that seeks to accomplish two things, require firearm owners to maintain liability insurance, as well as institute a 50% sales tax on ammunition not purchased/used at a shooting range it was purchased at. This is a slap in the face to hunters everywhere, premium ammunition is expensive often prohibitively as it is, and to increase these costs is an outrage. Hunters do not use their ammunition at shooting facilities and instead do so on hunting areas throughout the state. This would greatly impact the number of hunters and their abilities to hunt successfully. As for maintaining liability insurance on firearms, what will that do to reduce gun violence? Senate Bill 140 will do nothing to decrease the rates of violent crime or gun related crime, and serves to only increase the financial burden on sportsmen and women. Oppose this bill as it will not do an single cents worth of value to reducing the violence that is prevalent in this country.

Storage requirements for firearms is part of a recent supreme court ruling in which the storage requirement was struck down as being unconstitutional, this finding can be read in *Heller vs DC*. So simply put, any attempt at creating a storage requirement would face an instant lawsuit knowing that there is precedent for it to be struck down. To put it bluntly, a storage requirement is a waste of taxpayer money.

Creating a gun registry is an item that is brought up for debate from time to time, however, I wish to point out that that as a rule, felons and criminals do not make a habit of following laws. This being said I am confident that there would be mass refusal to register firearms, on the most basal level that the government has no right to know what personal property I own, the government does not register hands and feet, clothing, blunt objects, and other deadly objects found throughout ones home. In addition there is no purpose to such a regulation, the argument

should be made that police have a right to know, but as many officer friends and acquaintances have informed me, they are taught to assume that everyone is armed and dangerous and to treat them as such until they have information that the person or persons they are investigating is not armed/dangerous. To create a registry of firearms is a gross waste of tax payer money, as when firearms are purchased at a dealer, there is already a record of it, and that the police have a record of it already. It is part of a form that must be completed 4x, with one copy sent to the police in your town, with a copy kept by you and the dealer that sold the gun to you, and the final copy sent to the ATF for their records.

HB 6215 is a bill of particular concern to me, as a member of this community, the hunting community, and the target shooting community, I feel that there are many reasons that it should be opposed. Semiautomatic rifles are typically lower power cartridges than single shot and bolt action rifles, and make shooting pleasurable. For introducing new shooters to the sport I use an ar 15, because it does not kick as much as a comparable bolt action rifle does, because of the semi auto nature. Semi auto, for those who are unsure of the term, means that for each pull of the trigger a single round is fired, a second round can be fired by squeezing the trigger a second time, and so on and so forth. As a hunter, I feel semi automatic rifles increase ethical taking of game, simply due to the almost immediate availability of a second round to humanely take the game, if the first round isn't adequate. As a member of this community, I wish to point out that there are incredible numbers of rifles, especially semiautomatic, in the hands of the public, and that very few crimes are committed with these firearms. I understand the need to do something about the scary looking ar15 and other scary looking black rifles, but as rational and logical human beings, you must understand that rifles are very seldom used to commit crimes. This is because of the impractical nature of a semi automatic rifle. Ar15 rifles look scary simply because they are simply based off the ergonomic stylings of the dangerous M4 and M16 rifles that the military uses, which are truly assault weapons. These military (M4, and M16) rifles are capable of fully automatic fire, and their ownership by civilians is heavily regulated, and the only criminal that has used one of these in the pursuit of a crime since their regulation began, was a police officer who stole it.

Bulk purchases of ammunition have sporting uses, more so than I think the majority of people realize. I personally am a waterfowl hunter, and do extremely well in this state, and spend a minimum of 3 days week hunting. I shoot about half a box of shells to 2 boxes a day depending on what fowl, and where I am hunting. For those of you who are not familiar with the term box, a box commonly contains 25 rounds of shotgun ammunition. The group of hunters that I am a part of commonly buys 6-9 cases of ammunition a season. A case of the ammunition my group favors contains 10 boxes of 25 rounds each, for a total of 250 rounds per case. So at 1500 to 2250 rounds, I am certain that these 6-9 cases would qualify as a bulk purchase of ammunition. This is done over the internet, where I can find a cost effective manner to enjoy the sport and tradition of waterfowl hunting to the degree in which I currently do. To ban internet sales would greatly infringe upon the rights of hunters, sport shooters as well as persons whom purchase self defense ammunition online.

The purchase of a long gun (shotgun or rifle) in this state requires a hunting license, or a handgun carry permit, or a two week waiting period in which a background check is done. In my opinion to require a permit to target shoot, or purchase a gun which never leaves the house is an

overreach of the government based on the fact that most people who use guns for crime acquire their weapons illegally already and would laugh at applying for such a permit. As for fingerprints to be required for a purchase of a long gun, if it were changed to in the absence of a hunting license, pistol permit, or police identification that fingerprints are required I would support that concept. However as that particular bill reads now, I will put as much effort into its opposition as I can, unless those or similar changes are made.

Now, I do not wish for it to seem that all I have are criticisms of the bills put forth by the house and senate. House Bill 5179 is a perfect example of a reasonable common sense gun law. This bill would increase the availability to do background checks on people seeking to purchase guns. By all accounts is this a good idea, the already mandatory background checks prevented Adam Lanza from purchasing a rifle in Danbury, if this was a stricter background check with repercussions for failing, or at least a police interview then perhaps innocent lives could be saved, and for that please support the House Bill 5179.

A recent submission to the legislature has been the inclusion of a mental health check when a person renews their "Permit to carry handguns and revolvers". As a reasonable and responsible holder of such a permit, I would fully support a more robust check of my background/ mental health knowing that I have nothing to hide or be ashamed of.

Now a few interesting facts that should be considered; James Holmes (Aurora Cinema Shooter) did not choose the theater because it was the closest, or the largest, or the smallest. Of the 10 or so theaters in nearby proximity to his home, the Century movie theater was the only one that was a "gun free zone".

Schools commonly do not have armed personnel trained to respond to shooters, and additionally they are gun free zones. And as we know from the tragedy that is Sandy Hook Newtown Connecticut, Adam Lanza chose a school. Please install armed and trained security at schools. We already have it in airports, government, and many aspects of our lives as well, why not all schools? In the rare case there are officers present they are termed SROs, and they are typically the first responder at any school fight, or other altercation. Why not make SROs mandatory and expand their duty to be the first responder to an active shooter.

Let me ask you hypothetically, if you were a psychopath driven to kill, where would you go? A place where the populace is unable to meet deadly force in kind (No gun zone) ? Or a place where there is a chance that members of the populace would respond with deadly force (everywhere else)?

Obviously none of us are psychopaths but as the latest mass shooters have chosen gun free zones as their killing grounds, it stands to reason, as sane people that gun free zones only disarm the law abiding. As a matter of fact, with the exception of the 2011 Tuscon shooting all of the mass shootings that have taken place after 1950 have happened in a gun free zone. Let me remind you all that there are already laws against carrying a gun into those zones, yet these murderous people do. As a further reminder there are laws against murder and attempted murder, yet those still happen by criminals, and in the gun free zones none the less.

According to the FBI murder statistics from 2011, 323 people last year were killed by a rifle let, alone an assault rifle, in fact last year the murder rate from “hands, fists, feet, ect...” was 728. According the FBI and their records, hands fists and feet are more dangerous than AR15s, and many other “assault weapons”, truth be told, handguns are most often used in crimes, simply because they are easily accessible to criminals and used in gang shootings. If ar15s are that dangerous, then the most common rifle in the United States would more shootings/violence would be laid at its feet. This simply isn’t true; the ar15 is used in fewer murders than bare hands. If we are truly going to reduce violence to its maximum effect then perhaps hands, and feet should be banned before the rifles as they are responsible for fewer deaths. Banning one of the most common rifle platforms in the country is not the issue when the vast majority of gun violence happens through gang related, and drug related activity, and the people whom commit these crimes choose a handgun as it is concealable.

Gun violence is no doubt an issue, with many facets, but facts stand clearly. Hands and feet are more than twice as dangerous as rifles according to the FBI’s nationwide statistics. Adding to the restrictions and hoops legal gun owners must jump through will not save one life. The implement of the mass shootings should not be the target of legislature, the person using the implement should be. After all without a person to use it, a gun is just a conglomeration of metal pieces, an inanimate object, one that cannot load, cannot aim, and cannot fire itself.

As a person who has a bright future ahead in this glorious state, the constitution state, please do not infringe upon my unalienable rights with this misguided attempt to make us safer. There are logical steps to making us safer, being a more stringent and wide spread background check, an inclusive mental health check, fewer gun free zones, and finally strengthening the rights of the citizens to maintain their arms and defend themselves and their loved ones.

With my last remark I wish to state; No matter your views on god, or guns, if someone is breaking into your house late at night the first thing you will do is call for help from a person with a gun, secondly you will pray to god that they get here in time. For all our sake and for the sake of those whom have families to protect, especially young families, allow them that right, let them keep their firearms with the laws that we currently have in place.

I am greatly appreciative for the time that has been given to my testimony.

Alexander Welford