

My name is Bethany Agliardo and I live in Ridgefield, CT.

I am among the more than 80% of Connecticut citizens choose not to own a gun or to keep one around my children. We take our children to basketball games, swim meets and football games on the weekends and have never been to a shooting range. It is hard to imagine after the barrage of testimony from gun owners, but we are the vast majority. I certainly do not want to see a future where my children have to attend school with armed guards, armed teachers or bullet proof windows. I would like to see a future with fewer guns in Connecticut - not more.

I support the legislation recommended by Connecticut Against Gun Violence (CAGV). Our laws will shape our future. Passing gun control laws will not eliminate gun violence overnight any more than abolishing slavery immediately ended discrimination. But you need to give us a place to start.

After listening to Monday's testimony in Hartford, I finally understand just how powerful a minority lobbyist group like the NRA can be in dictating legislative decisions. They are emotional, angry and adamant. They have elevated gun ownership to a "God given" right. The gun manufacturers want to be sure that you consider how many employees they have in our state and the economic impact of passing legislation to save human lives. Emphatic gun owners refuse to accept that the second amendment does, in fact, have limitations. They have jammed their foot so firmly in the door that they don't seem to realize they are the ones holding it open for the criminals and the mentally ill behind them.

Gun ownership exposes the entire community to risk. Like it or not, I am forced to accept the risk that my neighbor who may not be well trained or mentally sound has such easy access to guns. I assume the risk that even the most well intentioned gun owner will be careless or use poor judgment. That perhaps the weapon will be used to escalate violence- as is so often the case- rather than to prevent it. It exposes us all to the risk that the weapon may be stolen, either by a stranger or a member of the gun owners own family and then used against innocent people. The number of victims from gun violence across our cities and towns simply continues to rise and our risk continues to increase.

I am unapologetic in asking gun owners to be a bit more inconvenienced moving forward. They need to accept stricter monitoring of their firearms. We need universal, complete background checks, longer waiting periods and more support for local police to enforce firearm laws. They need to accept that there are some weapons which are simply too dangerous for civilian use. These new laws may not eliminate my risk but it will minimize it. And it shifts the burden right back where it belongs - on those who choose to own them. The debate on military style assault weapons and high capacity magazines is fascinating. Throughout Monday's testimony, I heard 2 recurring statements from gun owners regarding semi automatic weapons (sometimes from the same person).

1. It does not make a difference if a deranged mass shooter has a semi-automatic weapon, he could simply reload quickly.

2. I need my AR -15 and high capacity magazine to effectively protect my home in case of multiple assailants because I would not have time to re-load.

Well which is it?? It can't be both.

The only argument for semi autos in the hands of the general public that comes close to being valid is the position that the 2nd amendment was giving us the right to raise a militia if needed to fight a tyrannical government. And that was a real and valid concern when it was written. Is it still? Because if it is we really better have a lot more than semiautomatics

at our disposal. If American civilians today need to be prepared to wage war- a few things have changed in the last 200 years and we might want some automatics, tanks and missiles in our backyards too.

The reality is that we have to look at what the real and valid concerns are in our society TODAY. Today, we have an extremely powerful military and large police force. And sadly, today we have an internal system that makes it extremely easy for criminals and the mentally ill in our country to access guns. And they are killing our children with them. I applaud the states effort to examine mental health issues and support services. But the reality is that we are not the only country with mental health issues and unless we plan on locking EVERYONE up who exhibits odd or antisocial behavior (talk about trampling individual rights) we need to stop being the only country that so easily hands them guns. So as you listen to NRA members and their battle cry that meaningful gun control somehow attacks their 2nd amendment right, please remember that the majority of our state is asking for change. And we also have the right to protect our children peacefully.

Sincerely,
Bethany Agliardo