

My name is Bill Hemby. I have been a part of the Newtown community for the past 25 years. I am serving as an Elder at Newtown Christian Church and was an employee of the Newtown Board of Ed at the high school until I started my own business. My wife was raised in Newtown and with the exception of 3 years that we lived in my hometown of San Diego she has been here her whole life and in fact works less than a mile from the school she attended as a little girl when a mad man attacked and killed innocent children and heroic but defenseless adults.

I feel it necessary to say I am a veteran of the U.S. Army; I have a state of Connecticut conceal carry permit and I am a Gunsmith. While I do not claim to be an expert, I have been around all kinds of firearms most of my 54 years.

I find no conflict in being here to speak out for our right to own and keep weapons suitable for self-defense and working in direct support of the clergy of Newtown in this most trying of times. My heart breaks regularly. One cannot be alive in Newtown and not hurt.

But today we are here to discuss gun violence. In our current climate of this discussion, it would seem that when one uses the word "gun", it is automatically associated with violence. And that is understandable, because guns can do some rather violent things.

But guns, in and of themselves are neither violent or non-violent. It is the person who uses the gun.

A knife is neither violent nor non-violent. But it can do some rather violent things. Again it depends on the person who uses the knife.

In fact, a pencil is neither violent nor non-violent, and it is probably never associated with violence, but again, depending on the person, it could do some rather violent things to another living creature.

If the goal is to stop all violence, there is a good possibility that it will never happen. That doesn't mean that we should not try, and I am sure that is the reason for this hearing today, to get as close to that goal as possible.

But, it is my opinion that gun violence is not going to stop by adding to the already existing laws that have attempted to curb it. In the case of the most recent incident in Sandy Hook Elementary School, there is nothing that legally allowed the shooter to bring those guns into that school. He violated every existing law. In fact, the guns were obtained in a murderous, illegal act perpetrated on his own mother. And what he did with those guns was indeed violent, and again it wasn't the guns, but the person using the guns.

I do not believe that all the legal gun owners should be punished because there are those that take the gun, or the knife, or a pencil, and use it for violent means. So, the issue is not with the guns, or whatever, but with the person and how they use it.

It must also be said that the second amendment of the United States constitution speaks clearly to the federal government and has no authority over this state. But the reason for that amendment is clear. Paul Revere took his ride to announce that the King's army was coming not to invade or even engage. But to take the arms of the citizens so they could not defend themselves and would be dependent on the government for their safety.

Many governments have set out to do the same since and before. And let me be clear, I make no accusations to or about this honorable group.

However, our forefathers said clearly,

"Those who would trade freedom for safety deserve neither nor will not they enjoy either."

That is as true today as it was then. Many will rise and have already risen in support of our God given rights, or if you prefer, "Our Creator has given certain unalienable rights".

I would assert that unencumbered self-defense to be among them.

I would also like to remind or inform this body that just last Friday the Department of Homeland Security put out a news release stating that they had ordered 8000 rifles. They were of the nature of an AR15 and described as, and I quote, "those suitable for self-defense".

These are what many have so often incorrectly referred to as "assault rifles" both in the media and in certain other government releases. As virtually anyone knowing even the basics of arms and their classifications would agree, there is no such class of firearms and to use it only inflames and deceives other uneducated hearers.

I would, in closing, like to say writing laws will do nothing to prevent evil from being as it is. We have seen too many helpless people being killed, or as in Cheshire a few years ago ...even worse can happen. On the other hand, a young mother at home with her twin children stopped a home invasion but only after being chased thru her Atlanta home and being compelled to empty her 6 shot hand gun into her assailant. And even so the criminal managed to get into his vehicle and drive away.

All that evil needs to prevail is for good men to do nothing...

Or perhaps to allow the government to make victims where citizens used to be.