

Proposed Legislation on Gun Control in Reaction to Sandy Hook School Shooting

Dear Representative Rebinbas and distinguished members of the Gun Violence Prevention and School Security task force,

My Name is Brian Harte. I come to you as a Police Officer of almost 20 years experience, 16 of which have been in my current capacity as a sworn-officer in the State of Connecticut. Prior to that I honorably served in the United States Marine Corps with a primary Military Occupational Specialty of Military Police.

I am trained in Active Shooter Response to State and National Tactical Officers Association standards. I have been a Field Training Officer for a majority of my law enforcement career, both in civilian and military law enforcement. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Law Enforcement Administration, minoring in International Security from the University of New Haven; graduating with a 4.12 G.P.A. Since 1992, I have spent a career that has required me to utilize firearms as a tool to protect lives and property. Following the Columbine School shootings in 1999, I have created and maintained a school-response protocol for my jurisdiction, working closely with officers from Columbine to create that protocol. I am an expert marksman and am certified to carry various firearms and weapons. I also work with people who suffer from mental illness on a daily basis as a police officer.

With that established, I am a humble man of principal. I walk a fine line every day that is the separation of right and wrong. I am a father to a 5-year-old beautiful daughter. I am a husband to an amazing wife. I am a son, a brother, an uncle and a godparent. I am a regular every-day citizen. It could have been my daughter that day in Sandy Hook and we all mourn the loss, regardless of which side of the gun control argument we are on.

As a pistol permit holder in this state, a citizen, and a sworn officer I can tell you with 'boots on the ground' experience that banning, taxing, re-classifying, limiting or trying to impose any more controls on the law abiding citizens in this State who own guns will have no impact on the big picture – that of keeping our children and our work places safe. The CGA will collectively only empower and aid criminals in being better at what they do, while weakening our own ability to defend ourselves. An example of this was evidenced in NY when a local newspaper put out the names of all pistol permit holders in the area, one of which was a sitting judge. Even this simplistic proposal will expose the confidential information of local, state, and federal LE officers in CT.

As this is a Task Force and Working Group public hearing, I will keep my testimony fairly limited at this time. However, I do wish to impart a few very important pieces of information. I will reserve greater testimony for future public hearings.

The AR is a platform. It can be a .22 cal, .308, 30-06, .223, or a pellet gun. It is a long gun, and unless illegally modified, can only fire one round at a time, regardless of how much ammunition one possesses, magazine capacity or the like. Since the long rifle is slated for longer distances, target-reacquisition takes more time than with a

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handgun, as the recoil is greater. Simply put, a long rifle is not an assault rifle. A “selective fire” rifle (aka: machine gun) is an assault-rifle and as you are aware – already illegal in CT, although the gang members and other criminals can and will still possess them.

So, when you think of an AR platform rifle, you visualize a military assault weapon. The two are not the same. As an example, while you may or may not like the look of a Honda Civic with graphics, loud music, tinted windows and the like, underneath it all, it is still exactly what it is; a car. It is the *look* and *idea* that makes *legal* weapons the target of scrutiny. Some excellent stocks are designed for the elderly, to have less of an impact on the shoulder. The examples can go on – and I speak from experience. A ban on legal rifles owned by law-abiding citizens does not solve the problem. I once found a Mac-10 (an illegal, automatic pistol) under a dumpster close to a park. A drug-dealer had left it there, fully loaded. The law didn’t stop that.

In all of my years as an officer, I have never once had to take a gun away from a law-abiding citizen, even if they had it on their hip – for they are quite clear about the fact that they are armed when encountered even for a minor traffic violation. And since they are breaking no laws re: gun violence, I respect their right to carry a weapon. My rights are no different if the situation were reversed.

I do support stronger school security and efforts to lessen workplace violence as well as mental health intervention.

But please understand this most important point: The criminal will find the means and method to carry out their crime, regardless of whatever laws the CGA implements. The death penalty, which was still in effect in CT at the time of the crime, did not dissuade the perpetrators in the Petit home invasion in Cheshire – and an entire family was lost.

Further restrictions on responsible gun owners only makes instant felons out of law abiding citizens, further jeopardizes people’s safety and their Constitutional Right to bear arms and defend themselves, and empowers the criminal – who is not listening to the laws to begin with. Gun control penalizes the citizens who are listening to and following the law in a State that is already one of the most restrictive on this issue.

While I reserve the right to submit further testimony in writing and in person, I encourage this Task Force to find other solutions and not create larger problems. I am against all gun-control proposals at this time.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brian Harte
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