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Gun Violence Prevention Working Group

Dear Committee Members:

I will be unable to attend the January 28, 2013 working group meeting. I would like to however, submit for consideration my testimony.

I am a law-abiding citizen, veteran and responsible gun owner.

I am saddened by the tragic events in Newtown, Connecticut, but I believe that efforts to impose new restrictions on me and other lawful and responsible owners like me are misguided. Connecticut maintained an "assault weapons ban" after the Federal ban expired in 2004 however; the ban does not address the root causes of individual's intent on imposing evil on others. Further restrictions on lawful firearms ownership such as redefining the term "assault weapon" or imposing other restrictive measures such as limits to the size of ammunition feeding devices will not impact criminals.

The rights of citizens to bear arms are outlined in the Second Amendment of the US Constitution and Section 15 of Article First of the Connecticut State Constitution. Imposing additional regulation around firearms is a direct violation of the rights granted under both governing documents. I urge you to not impose on these protected rights.

The term "assault weapon" has been used to push an agenda that imposes restrictions on firearms based mainly on cosmetic features. Also according to all available data; rifles that are defined as "assault weapons" are used in less than 4 percent of all crimes nationwide. As a reminder the modern sporting rifle such as those based on the AR15 design operate no differently than any other semi-automatic rifle. In addition there has been much discussion around "military style" weapons; that line of argument would apply to all modern firearms including the bolt action rifles that everyone states they want to protect for hunters. A brief lesson in history will show that almost every firearm is some sort of decedent of a design that was used by the military thus making all firearms "military style."

Imposing additional restrictions on law abiding citizens will not prevent evil people and criminals from committing the heinous acts against the public. Your focus should be on strengthening mental health care and improving the quality of data supporting NICs checks (National Instant Criminal Background Check System). Do NOT pass more gun laws; instead, work to enforce the more than 20,000 State and Federal gun laws already on the books.

In particular I am very concerned over some of the bills that have recently been introduced into the legislature. I am asking that the recommendations of this committee do not support any of this proposed legislation that does not address the root cause.

HB-5112: An Act Concerning the disclosure of the names and address of persons holding handgun permits.

HB-5268: An act requiring the maintenance of liability insurance by firearm owners and establishing a sales tax on ammunition.

SB-1: An act concerning the protection of children, families and other individuals from violence.

SB-21: An act authorizing bonds of the State for an eternal light in memory of victims of gun violence.

SB-122: An act concerning restrictions on gun use.

SB-124: An act banning large capacity ammunition magazines.

SB-140: An act concerning liability insurance for firearm owners and sales tax on ammunition.

There are several bills that have been introduced that I believe would strengthen the ability to reduce violent crimes. These bills would support the law abiding citizens of this State and reinforce penalties for criminals.

HB-5165: An act concerning the defense of a person's home, motor vehicle or business.

HB-5176: An act concerning the application requirements for a temporary State permit to carry a pistol or revolver.

HB-5179: An act concerning access to the interactive voice response system of the Special Licensing and firearms Unit of the Division of State Police.

HB-5269: An act increasing the penalty for criminal use of a firearm or electronic defense weapon.

As a State we should be working to improve the economic environment, prosecuting criminals and building strong communities through education and values.

Please represent me and all the citizens of Connecticut by addressing root cause and not over regulating law abiding firearms owners.

Respectfully,

Brian M VanNote