

To the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group of the Bipartisan Task Force -

I urge you to take action to continue Connecticut's national leadership in the responsible regulation of guns. Many years ago, the Connecticut legislature took action to ban assault weapons - weapons that had at least two characteristics rendering them more suitable for a deadly attack on multiple humans than for hunting or sportsmanship. In the intervening years, guns that meet the letter of the law, but not its spirit, have proliferated. The assault weapons ban needs to be revisited and extended to weapons with only one of these characteristics, not two. I also encourage the Working Group to implement the other reforms recommended by Connecticut Against Gun Violence (CAGV), including registration requirements and a prohibition on high capacity magazines. These are sensible measures designed to reduce violence without unduly interfering with the use of guns by responsible gun owners.

I would like to offer a unifying perspective to what has become an increasingly polarized debate. I believe everyone testifying, whether they are in favor of or opposed to more gun regulation, shares a common purpose. We all want to protect ourselves and our children but we disagree on the best way to do it. Safety is universal and fundamental - without it, nothing else matters.

As legislators, you have the difficult job of reconciling competing views and deciding for our state how to best achieve our shared objective of protecting ourselves and our children from senseless violence. I applaud the legislature's approach to considering various aspects of this issue - not only gun control, but also school security and mental health. The problems contributing to the tragedy in Newtown are multi-factorial and the solutions must be as well. It is imperative, however, that real reforms on gun regulation be enacted as part of the solution. Insanity was once defined as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Our current system of gun regulation both in Connecticut and nationally is contributing to tragic results and will continue to do so until we change it. Opponents of many of the suggested gun regulation measures say there is no proof that they will be effective in reducing gun violence. There is value in learning from other states' and countries' experiences and there is evidence that many of the proposed reforms would have a positive impact. Even if the effectiveness can't be definitively established, the fact that "it hasn't been done" isn't a valid excuse not to try. If all legislation required advance proof of effectiveness, innovation would never occur and many of the important things the Connecticut legislature has accomplished over the years would have been impossible.

The most important thing is for the Connecticut legislature to act -- to send a clear message that the current system is unacceptable and that we are willing to take steps to improve it. Failure to act sends a different message - that we fear change more than tragedy or that the issues are too hard and we are powerless to address them. The nation is watching Connecticut. You have an opportunity to continue to lead - to recognize the common goal that unites us and to build a safer future for Connecticut and the nation.

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration.

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