

To the members of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety,

This is the first time that I have taken the time to write any politician to voice my opinion. I have not always agreed with decisions that have been made in the past but I held to the belief that our elected officials made those decisions with the best interest of the majority of the public in mind. What I have heard recently in the proposed gun laws has made me question whether that is the case anymore. My hope is that at least one person on your panel reads this and finds enough value in it to pass it on to another person. I hope you take the time to read my thoughts.

I'd like to start by saying that I am a parent of two beautiful kids that are in preschool and kindergarten and I was devastated by the tragedy in Sandy Hook and fully agree that the trend of violence in recent years needs to be addressed. I am also a police officer and I see firsthand that there are security issues that need to be looked at to protect our children. In the weeks since the tragedy, I have had the pleasure of being posted at local schools in the morning as kids arrive. I have heard from most parents that they feel better seeing me as they drop their kids off. In my duties I also see many of the evident failures of our mental health system in my day to day activity. Finally, I am a law abiding, responsible gun owner. I recently saw something that I thought summed up my reasoning for owning guns. "I don't own guns because I am evil, I own guns because I have lived long enough to see the evil in this world". I enjoy the sport of target shooting but primarily I want to be able to protect my family from harm, even if the possibility of needing to do so is remote.

I do not feel that new gun laws are the solution to our problems. There are already laws in place to deter this type of violence (I say simply violence because that is the core problem, guns or not). Among others, there is a statute for murder as well as a statute for assault with a deadly weapon. What these statutes rightfully do is place the responsibility and punishment on the person guilty of the crime. A ban on certain guns or magazines punishes only law abiding citizens and has little to no effect on criminals or crime. The Clinton era assault weapon ban was not renewed because the FBI found that it did not reduce gun violence. Since that ban expired gun violence is actually down. If someone has the will and determination to do harm, they will find a way to do so, with or without a gun. Recently a young man from Vernon traveled to Wyoming to murder his father and his father's girlfriend. He did so with a knife, a bow and arrows before killing himself with a knife. He applied for a pistol permit but obviously didn't need a gun to complete his objective.

I am not against a meaningful, common sense discussion about gun control. However to date, it seems that what has been proposed is at the very least misguided, if not completely ridiculous in the case of limiting someone to a single round. As for an "assault weapon" ban, the features that have been decided to make a rifle an "assault rifle" have no effect on the function of the rifle. A pistol grip, collapsible stock, bayonet lug, flash suppressor or detachable magazines do not make a rifle more or less lethal. Most of those features are not even available in this state due to the current law. These "assault rifles" only share the appearance of a military rifle but do not function the same way. It is no different than someone painting their sedan to look like Jeff Gordon's race car. It still isn't a race car, it just looks like one. The "evil" AR-15 was designed in 1957. While it has gone through a few cosmetic changes, the function of the rifle remains the same. Yet, in recent years it has been portrayed as a killing machine. If the rifle hasn't changed in all that time, what has? Is it that the traditional family structure isn't what it used to be? Is it the violence on TV and in video games, specifically the realism that is portrayed? Is it how we handle the mentally ill today compared to decades past? Ultimately, I don't have the answers but I believe the right question to ask after these events is "how did someone come to the conclusion that murder was the answer to their problems?", not "why does someone want or need this rifle or that magazine?". I don't expect everyone to agree with my point of view but I expect them to respect my decision to exercise my 2nd Amendment rights. I refuse to be a helpless victim of a violent crime and I don't want to be limited in what I can do to protect myself because of the actions of the very people that would try to hurt me and my family.

While the Sandy Hook tragedy is obviously fresh in our minds we are not that far removed from another tragedy that struck our state. It has been less than six years since the Cheshire home invasion. What both of these events have in common, among others like them, is that people have it in their hearts to do horrible things to their fellow man. It is because of events like the Cheshire home invasion that I choose to own guns and why I want to have every advantage available to me to effectively protect myself and my loved ones. While many are quick to question why I would want a high capacity magazine, I would argue that I'd rather survive an event like that with a surplus of rounds than to come up one round short.

I thank you for taking the time to read this and I appreciate that you are taking the time to look into meaningful change to protect our children. I only ask that you take time to make sure any action taken doesn't penalize law abiding citizens. New York just offered a great example of poorly thought out legislation when they passed a law limiting the capacity of magazines to 7 rounds and never thought to exempt law enforcement. If they missed that little detail, is it also possible that they didn't take time to think about the rest of the content and its effect on their citizens? Thank you for your time and I wish you luck in this endeavor. I hope it results in positive changes that will prevent these tragedies in the future.

Respectfully,

Charles W Harmon