

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views regarding gun violence. I am a resident of Sandy Hook and have been for 30 years. My company is located on 52 Riverside road, 1/2 mile from the Sandy Hook Elementary School . What happened there is just incomprehensible, and I sympathize with those who are suffering the pain it caused. I thank God I have not been effected personally.

It is my fervent hope, and the establishment of your task force to address the issue reassures me, that all measures to prevent this from happening again will be considered. I have heard the usual hysterical responses that are simply repeats of the call for the usual ineffective and actually counterproductive "solutions" to the violence problem.

As you know, this is a complex problem with no simple solution. We hear about more gun control, gun bans, and the usual vilification of the NRA. I watched the hearing tonight at the Newtown HS, and I was pleased to hear many cooler heads' testimony and proposals, most of which addressed some of the many possible causes of the violence. Guns themselves of course, but mental health, security, and as stated by Newtown's chief of police, the communication between the mental health providers and the police, and that the patient doctor privacy doctrine must be tempered when a patient is a possible violent danger.

As far as the guns are concerned, I believe that we have a right to protect ourselves provided we pass a background check which would include a mental health provision. The "assault weapons", as defined in the prior laws are not military automatic weapons, but semi-automatic, cosmetically "military style" guns. Why a gun's appearance makes it dangerous I don't know. I don't have a problem if these are banned but I don't think the ban would be effective. I feel the same about large capacity magazines - the shooter would just have more smaller capacity magazines - they can be switched very quickly. Bans, as proved by the drug and the repealed alcohol bans, are ineffectual at best and at worst spawn a criminal, violent industry. BTW, all the mass shootings except the one at the military base were in gun free zones!

Looking at some history, mass shootings were unheard of before the gun controls came onto the scene, in the 60's, I believe. Gun violence, excepting the mass shootings, have declined over the years in spite of much increased guns in circulation, except in inner cities in spite of very strict gun controls there. Is it possible that the drug culture has something to do with this? As a matter of fact, guns (and ammunition) were readily available when I was young (I'm 80 now), they were sold in Sears stores, at sporting goods and hardware stores, even the long gone general stores, and there was no age restriction, either. Every boy had his jackknife, and carried it to school. My granddaughter was shocked to hear this! The Westport HS had a gun range in the basement! The boy scouts used it to qualify for their marksmanship Merritt badge. We took our guns to school and put them in our lockers for the after school target shooting! nobody batted an eye! There is certainly some force at work today causing the violence besides the guns. This is the kind of thing that will make you earn your pay trying to solve the violence problem.

We can't ban drugs (even though they are banned!) but we can through education (of the parents, the teachers, and the kids) reduce the use of drugs.

We must improve our mental health system. Ironically Newtown was the location of the Fairfield Hills Mental Hospital until it was closed a number of years ago. Where are the patients now? Homeless? Pushing people off subway platforms? On drugs? Planning their mass killing? The civil liberties people shouted that they should not be incarcerated, so we dumped them on the street telling them they must take their medications. I'll leave this subject for the professionals.

I could perhaps go on, but you're probably bleary-eyed from reading this so far. I'm confident that your task force will do the right thing, but we must realize eliminating the violence completely is unrealistic.

I'll leave you with this thought: The definition of stupidity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express some ideas, and good luck. You have your work cut out for you.

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