

My name is Chris Cosgrove and I live in New Milford. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my opinion on ways to try and prevent a reoccurrence of the horrific crime of December 14.

I am a gun owner and hunter. As a gun owner I am every bit as committed to keeping an open mind regarding any and all options that could prevent these events or even lessen the carnage – including gun control options. However I will only support options that are proven effective and have data that supports their effectiveness.

A ban on “assault” style weapons make no sense and are being promoted by people who know virtually nothing about guns. For the record I do not own a rifle of this type and have no intention to buy any. Functionally speaking, an AR-15 rifle is little different than a standard hunting rifle like a Browning BAR. If you eliminate AR-15s the next mass murderer will only have to slightly change his plans and can easily choose another type of firearm to inflict mass casualties. A standard shotgun is capable of simultaneously firing 15 8mm projectiles. According to the Christian Science Monitor there are 82 million shotguns in the United States. Should we ban shotguns? Of course not. Can we focus on solutions that might actually have a positive effect instead of making news headlines?

Much discussion has also been devoted to magazine clips. I think this is an area where restrictions make some sense. According to a pretty balanced article in the News Times on January 27, every mass shooting incident since 1984 the killers had clips with greater than 10 round capacities. However this will not reduce the number of mass shooting we have to bear in this state, but yes this restriction might lessen the casualties.

The major problem I have with the debate since December 14 is that gun control has been virtually the sole focus with strict enforcement of existing laws and mental health issues only getting token mention.

Additionally I hear no bold new proposals from our leaders – no “out of the box” ideas.

The Wall Street Journal reports that only a small fraction of people who lie on the gun applications ever get prosecuted. An article appearing on January 23 cites that the FBI referred to the ATF over 76,000 violations on applications and only 44 were prosecuted! Also consider even an egregious violation as happened in Webster, New York. A woman lied on an application for firearms and handed them over to a convicted felon who then killed firemen. The maximum penalty for this woman will be a \$250,000 fine and 10 years in jail. Why is she not an accessory to murder and put away for much longer? We must strictly enforce our current laws and strengthen other laws against those convicted of gun crimes.

How about holding mental health professionals accountable for notifying the state of people who have deemed a risk to themselves or others? Also, in the 1960's and 70's we weakened our laws against forced institutionalization. I believe there is a direct link between that and the rising homeless population and the dramatic rise of mass murders starting in the decade of the 1980's. Since the beginning of the 20th century there was an average of 3.25 mass murders (4 or more deaths during a single event) per decade. Since 1980, that average has ballooned up to 9.25 counting this decade which isn't even a third of the way through. Clearly something has changed over the last thirty-odd years while our gun laws have only gotten stricter. More gun laws are not the answer. I look for leadership to sort out how we can get to the bottom of the reasons for the sudden rise of this extreme violence.

Lastly, I would advocate we discuss how to better use law enforcement to keep us safe – which is the primary role of government. Firstly, the “war on drugs” is just as effective as prohibition. The sooner we come to grips with that on the state and national level, the better. Think about how we could redeploy our well trained law enforcement officers if they weren't bogged down in fighting a losing war. Also, it strikes me as crazy every time I see a well trained and compensated state police officer sitting alongside a highway pointing a radar gun at traffic. How about we use speed cameras and allow that officer to do more to keep residents safe from violent criminals?

I pray that we use the horrific events of December 14 to put politics and bias aside and work together to truly make Connecticut a safer place for all.

Best regards,
Chris Cosgrove
New Milford, CT