

Members of the Task Force,

My name is Chris Lemos, and I live in Stratford, CT.

I am a legal gun owner, a certified firearms instructor, a certified Range Safety Officer, and an executive member of the Connecticut Citizens Defense League (CCDL).

I am asking the Task Force to oppose any and all further restrictions on the lawful ownership of firearms.

While the focus of both this task force and the state legislature in general appears to be almost exclusively on guns, it should be focused on the violence. Good people don't suddenly become violent in the presence of a gun, and violent people do not stop their violent behavior simply because you pass more gun restrictions.

The problem with "gun violence" is the violence; not the guns. I'm sure you will hear people talk about how high "gun violence" is in the US compared to other countries. You'll hear how these numbers dropped after guns were banned or severely restricted. When quoting those numbers, what is usually left out is the overall rates. They neglect to mention the overall violent crime rate stays the same, or even goes higher. Does anyone really think that a violent criminal will turn into a calm, law abiding citizen if you make a few more laws? I know the Task Force doesn't believe that, or they wouldn't have set up metal detectors for today's hearing. It's already against the law to bring a weapon into this building, isn't that law enough?

Adding more laws might make you feel like you've done something, but it doesn't. It doesn't address WHY people commit acts of violence. California, Illinois, Washington DC, New Jersey, Massachusetts and New York all have more restrictive gun laws than CT. Yet those places are no safer than CT. Then look at states like Vermont and New Hampshire, with among the least restrictive gun laws in the nation, yet they are among the safest states in the country to live. 50 years ago you could order a rifle or shotgun out of the Sears mail-order catalog. You could walk into a hardware store and buy a pistol without a background check. Kids with BB guns and .22 rifles (that often held more than 10 rounds, by the way!) slung over their shoulders rode bikes down the road to their favorite plinking pit outside of town. And 50 years ago we had less violent crime than we do today.

More gun control does NOT equal less violent crime. If this Task Force TRULY wants to reduce violence instead of just using the horrible tragedy in Newtown to advance an antigun agenda they must look for the cause of violence, not the effect. What is different today? Lots of things. Violent media is an obvious thing to look at. So is the trend of medicating people for every little emotional issue. Growing up I didn't know any other kids who were prescribed behavior modifying drugs. Now it seems half the parents I know have a child who takes some drug or other every day. What else has changed? Today there are far more single parent families, more divorced families, more 2 parent families with both parents working. Might any of these have something to do with the changes in society? I don't know, but it bears looking into.

You must also consider the economic impact additional gun restrictions will have on a state already struggling with debt and a bad economy. A report from the CT Office of Legislative Research dated April 18th, 2011 discusses the financial impact of restricting firearm magazine

capacity. It says:

*"... a ban on large capacity magazines could directly cost the state more than \$100 million. Owners surrendering large capacity magazines would need to purchase new magazines to have a functional firearm, thus reducing their spending on other sectors of the state's economy, such as groceries, clothing, or other goods and services. NSSF estimates that this would result in a loss of \$10.6 million to \$42.3 million in economic activity and between 80 and 320 jobs in Connecticut. In addition, the total cost to consumers based on the replacement of four large magazines per firearm would be close to \$58 million. We note that while replacement of large magazines may reduce spending in other sectors of the state's economy, it would likely increase spending in the firearms industry.*

*Retailers would also suffer a loss because they would have to adjust current inventory. For example, NSSF estimates that 65% of the semi-automatic firearms sold at Cabela's have high-capacity magazines.*

*In addition to these direct costs, NSSF claims that a ban would ultimately force the state's firearm and magazine manufacturers to leave the state. They base this assertion on the fact that the state's firearm manufacturers have stated that they will not be able to continue business in Connecticut without the commercial retail market. NSSF notes that tax revenue would be lost from relocating manufactures and jobs. The industry and its employees pay over \$81 million in taxes, including property-, income-, and sales-based levies."*

This is just for magazines. It doesn't take into consideration that many firearms simply do not have magazines available in lower capacity then they were designed for. These firearms would become useless if their standard capacity magazines are outlawed.

It doesn't take into consideration the banning of firearms like the AR-15 type, which is the best selling firearm in the country. Nor does take into consideration the financial losses on many levels that may be incurred by banning these. Just like with the magazines mentioned above, except instead of a \$20-\$30 magazine, you're talking about guns that generally cost from \$600 at the low end to many thousands of dollars for a premium model.

Many of these guns are made right here in CT, by companies like Colt, Stag Arms, and Ruger. Many smaller CT companies make the parts and magazines for these guns. Connecticut's gun manufacturing industry directly employs 2,899 workers, earning \$224 million a year and producing \$967 million in weapons and ammunition, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

Can CT afford these losses in exchange for laws that will not reduce violence?

Can CT afford the almost guaranteed legal challenges? You can expect these challenges will be well funded from both inside and outside the state. The last time CT's current assault weapon ban was seriously challenged in court was 20yrs ago. It was upheld then, but times have changed. That was before the Supreme Court decided the Heller and McDonald cases. That was before the Federal assault weapon ban had expired, the AR-15 had become the best selling gun in the country, and gun sales in general are higher then ever before in history. The number of new pistol permits issued by the Connecticut State Police has risen from 5,085 in 2005 to 12,107 in 2011 and approximately 18,000 in 2012 That shows a rather dramatic increase in firearm ownership in the state, especially since our population growth has been flat. It is very possible

that a new legal challenge could even actually reduce CT's laws down to a less restrictive federal level.

Please keep all this in mind, and focus on reducing violence, not reducing the rights of law abiding citizens.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for your service on the Task Force.

Chris Lemos  
Stratford, CT