

Dear Legislators,

Unfortunately we have a prior commitment and will be unable to attend the public meeting on Monday. Please accept this as our testimony:

First, we would like to say that we were devastated by the Newton tragedy and our feelings cannot be expressed into words. As parents of children the same age that were murdered, we were deeply affected by this tragedy. The pure evil of this disturbed individual was unfathomable and our prayers remain with the parents & families, and first responders.

We understand this bi-partisan committee has been tasked with developing recommendations designed to reduce gun violence with two other committees reviewing school safety and mental health issues. As such we will limit our comments to firearms and criminal possession but much can be done on the mental health side to keep firearms out of the hands of mentally imbalanced individuals without taking away rights to law abiding citizens. Regrettably many, including the media and politicians, have utilized this tragedy to spread their own agendas and misinformation.

We would urge the committee to review the facts available from legitimate sources such as FBI reports and not information implied as factual in media reports or hearsay conversations being offered by many. The committee should wait until the actual facts are released from the CT State Police Report regarding the Sandy Hook murders. For the Legislation to act quickly only “because we need to do something” or “we need to set an example for the rest of the country” instead of acting rationally and intelligently will be an unfortunate mistake.

We have done our own research utilizing the FBI’s 2011 Uniform Crime Report and the results were quite contrary to the misinformation being presented by many. Reviewing the available FBI data (see attached), it can be seen:

1. The US Population and gun ownership increased every year and the Violent crime, Murder, rape, and robbery have all **decreased** significantly since 1992 and continue to decline well past the 2004 lapse in the assault weapons ban.
2. In 2011, there were **7992** firearms homicides after accounting for justifiable homicides by Law Enforcement and private citizens (591 justifiable homicides).
3. Of the 7992 homicides, only **278** homicides occurred by rifle (includes the media’s termed assault weapons) – again accounting for justifiable homicides.
4. The partial breakdown of US homicides: Handguns (5,768), Knife (1,646), Fists/Hands (723), Hammers/clubs (476), Shotgun (336), rifle (278).
5. In 2011, there were **94** firearm homicides in CT. Of these only one (1) was by use of rifle.
6. The partial breakdown of 2011 CT homicides: Handgun (54), Knives (18), Fists/Hands (6), Shotgun (1), rifle (1).
7. **66%** of all homicides in Connecticut occur in the cities of Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven which make up only **14%** of the overall population of Connecticut.
8. Include Stamford and Waterbury and about **80%** of all homicides occur in only 5 cities that comprise of only **22%** of the total population.

While researching deaths caused by other means it was interesting to discover that there are **more alcohol related fatalities** in the United States and Connecticut than gun homicides. In 2007 there were **12,998** DWI fatalities nationwide in the US (FARS 2009 report) and in CT there were **111** alcohol related fatalities. President Obama has stated and I have heard CT Legislators repeat the same indicating if only one life can be saved, then we need to act. Where is the outrage over alcohol deaths?

Also reviewing the data above, one will notice there were eighteen (**18**) times more knife homicides and six (**6**) times more fists/hands homicides in CT than homicides using rifles (which include semi-automatic rifles). Nationally more homicides occurred by knives, fist/hands, hammers, and shotguns than by rifles.

Regarding the 7992 National and 94 CT homicides, the problem is not legal gun owners who obey the law; it is the **illegal** criminal gun owners who by far are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the gun homicides. Remember about **80%** percent of all homicides in CT occurred in only five cities which comprise of less than a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total population, and are where the majority of people are in possession of **illegal** firearms. **Criminals** do not have pistol permits, do not obey laws, and do not buy from licensed firearm dealers. **Criminals** do steal their guns or buy on the streets (black markets).

The majority of the gun control bills being proposed in the 2013 Legislation will only impact Legal Law Abiding gun owners without any effect on criminals and will only serve to increase violent crimes in the State. For instance, how will requiring liability insurance prevent murder? We have many drivers in the State who are required by law to own insurance but do not. Most citizens obey the law and have insurance but of course criminals do not. Do you really think criminals and mentally ill individuals will obtain insurance? Only law abiding gun owners will purchase and of course be subjected to more costs and fees.

Where is the misconception that the homicides related to semi-automatic rifles or as known in the media as “assault weapons” is out of control? Based on what – 278 homicides out of 7992 or 1 out of 94 in CT? The FBI data shows otherwise. Why are bills being proposed to ban so called assault weapons merely on cosmetic features? Please stop this misinformation and act based on the FBI data which shows there is **no** massive outbreak in homicides by so-called assault weapons.

Magazine capacity restrictions sound good at first but when you analyze this further you must ask how this will eliminate high capacity magazine possession by criminals. Again, are we kidding ourselves by thinking criminals, who by definition and action do not obey the laws, will voluntarily turn in or get rid of their high capacity magazines? You know they won't! Additionally, reducing the capacity to fewer than 10 rounds will essentially render most handguns illegal to own or purchase by law abiding citizens. This is specifically why several bills are targeting 7 rounds capacity. This bill will restrict law abiding citizens from being able to protect themselves – the criminals will have an overwhelming advantage over the citizens of CT. Recently a mother in Georgia protecting her 9 year old twins shot a home invader multiple times and he walked out of the house. Imagine the fate of this innocent family if she was limited to a reduced capacity. Parents do protect their children with firearms from bad people routinely.

Gun registration will serve no purpose in preventing any homicides. This data would only serve to either confiscate or tax law abiding citizens who own guns. Additionally, why would anyone trust the government to protect and use this list when we have proposed legislation to make similar data accessible to the public? On another note, the gun offender registry being proposed to track criminals who utilized a gun during a crime (SB-737) would be more appropriate.

Eliminate the protection of CT pistol permit holder personal information from FOI requests is absolutely outrageous and will do nothing to protect our children or society. This bill, if adopted, will actually put families and their children at risk by alerting the criminals to where guns are available for theft. As you know the irony is, people with pistol permits have been subjected to extensive local, state, and federal background checks.

Imposing a tax on ammunition will not increase the safety of children or anyone else. How will a tax on ammunition curb gun violence?? Research has shown criminals do not buy large volumes of ammunition or buy any at all (typically they steal). Sport shooters and hunters buy ammunition and this bill will only serve to hurt these folks. Additionally this bill would hurt local businesses since most CT citizens would cross State lines to buy their ammunition.

Make no mistake; this discussion is not about hunting. It is about every law abiding citizen's right and ability to protect their children, husbands, and wives from bad people who plan on doing evil things. CT has hunting regulations which already dictate maximum rounds in hunting guns based on season and game being pursued (most limited to 3 rounds).

We could go on but will stop here. If you really want to curb gun violence, go after the criminals and mentally imbalanced, not law abiding gun owners. Start to enforce federal firearm laws (enforcement at an all-time low) instead of only using these laws as a plea-bargaining tool. Increase the State penalties/sentencing for illegal possession of a firearm, use of a firearm in a crime, and death in a crime by firearm – serious time such as 10 years, 20 years, and 35 years minimum sentencing, respectively. Please remember to exempt law abiding citizens who are defending their families and their lives from criminal actions from undo prosecution. Reopen institutions for the treatment of the mentally ill instead of releasing to the streets. Stop allowing criminal (especially violent criminals) from being able to earn time off of their sentences and released early into society.

In closing we leave you with this: We hope there will never be another Newton massacre or Cheshire home invasion again. But there have been evil people doing evil acts since the beginning of mankind and regrettably we will not be able to remove these people from society no matter what laws are passed. Please do not restrict law abiding citizens the ability to protect their family and loved ones.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

Concerned Bolton Residents

