

My name is Daniel Gompper. I am a resident of Columbia, CT. I am testifying because I am a parent, a husband, a tax payer, and a gun owner.

Many of the legislative proposals that have been discussed by the members of the State House and Senate have focused on several solutions to reduce gun violence in Connecticut. However, I feel that some of the proposed legislation is being formed with a misunderstanding about how some firearms are actually used. Some of the proposed legislation is aimed at revising the existing State Assault Weapons ban. I have to take this opportunity to question the commission regarding certain concepts that are being publicly floated for inclusion in the pending legislation. (SB-161, HB-5647)

Currently, under the existing Connecticut Assault Weapons Ban, there exists a legal test where an assault weapon is defined by any semi-automatic firearm with a detachable magazine and at least two prohibited features, such as a pistol grip, bayonet mount, or flash hider.(CGS § 53-202a) Proposed legislation (SB-161, HB-5647) is seeking to rewrite law to a test of a single prohibited feature. As a result, any semi-automatic rifle with a detachable magazine, AND any other feature such as a pistol grip would then become defined as an illegal assault rifle. This proposal would render tens of thousands of legally owned, and responsibly used firearms illegal as a consequence of their design rather than their use. My primary concern is the impact this will have on popular rifles such as those derived from the original Colt AR-15 design with legitimate sporting use such as the Connecticut produced Stag Arms Model 5, Colt Match Target, and Ruger SR556, which inherent to their design, cannot have anything but a detachable magazine and a pistol grip.

These rifles are ideal hunting and competition rifles. They are lightweight and accurate. Unlike a wood-stocked Winchester, they are not ruined if caught out in the rain. Their basic design has been around for 50 years, and is familiar to sportsmen in their 20's through their 70's. The AR-15 is serviceable and modular. Any owner can easily change barrels, calibers, sights, scopes, triggers, to suit their needs and game. These are all tasks that would require a long and expensive trip to the gunsmith with a traditional hunting rifle.

I strongly encourage the commission to strike from any proposed legislation any language that would determine status as an assault rifle by being based on a single prohibited feature, rather than the existing two. Quite simply, many popular sporting rifles in common use would be banned because they could never functionally be made compliant as a consequence of their design. Note that I am NOT trying to convince you that I need a 30 round magazine. I am asking you to understand that hunters and competitive target shooters have adopted AR-15 derived rifles for very practical and legitimate purposes, and that pending legislation MUST reflect their use.

And on a final note, on behalf of the many young Veterans and servicemen that I am privileged to personally know. I ask you to consider that while they may not be actively serving in the armed forces at this moment, that they are still young enough to possibly be called back into service to fight a future war. And no law should prevent them from practicing essential firearms drills with sporting rifles compliant to our existing assault weapons ban. In conclusion, I urge you to consider that any language that may ban sporting arms on a single prohibited feature, is simply too restrictive for and shortsighted. Please look to other avenues to solve the problem.

Please vote against:
SB-161
HB-5647

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