

January 28, 2013

Testimony – Gun Violence Protection Working Group

SUPPORT

Any legislation that can be shown to effectively protect school children and others in public buildings, including legislation which promotes improved security measures, on-site security personnel or enhanced police presence.

Any legislation which improves the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) data base and screening process, particularly as it relates to individuals with known mental conditions.

Any legislation which promotes improved mental health screening, treatment and reporting as it relates to the NICS data base.

OPPOSE

Any legislation which has little or no evidence that it will prevent mass school or other similar shootings.

Any legislation which is a “blanket” ban on entire classes of guns or magazines which infringe on the Constitutional rights of legal gun owners, particularly limiting the magazine capacity for guns used primarily for personal or home defense.

Any legislation which “criminalizes” legal gun owners whose only crime would be violating the statute.

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Thank You for the Opportunity to Testify:

My name is David Francis; I am a resident of Guilford, CT

I am a West Point graduate, an Air Force veteran, and I own guns primarily for home and self-protection.

No one in this room will contest that the shooting in Newtown was a tragedy, one that we would all like to prevent in the future.

The differences in positions of people testifying today center on **what steps would be most effective** in preventing any recurrence, **not** that nothing should be done

The **real issue** in gun violence is **not the control of guns**, rather, it is the **control of murderers, sociopaths, those with dangerous mental conditions and, God forbid, any home-grown terrorists** who would see the soft target of schools as a means of releasing their rage, making a sick statement, getting their 15 minutes of fame or imposing jihad here in America; and **they can do that by using a number of possible weapons, not just guns.**

In the week following the tragic shooting deaths in Newtown, the Gallup Organization released a poll in which a representative sample of citizens across the country were presented with six different approaches for preventing mass shootings at schools and asked to rate them for effectiveness. Unfortunately, this poll was lost in the rush by legislators at state and federal levels to be the first to propose draconian gun control bills.

The **first choice**, by far, in the Gallup poll was **increased police presence in schools**. Wayne LaPierre of the NRA proposed this a week after Newtown and was widely derided. Interestingly, Barbara Boxer, the liberal Democrat Senator from California proposed the same thing a few days earlier and her proposal was well received! Since Newtown, numerous schools have announced that they are investigating or adopting this approach since they realize that police response to a very rare and random occurrence at a "no gun zone" facility is **always** going to be too late.

The second choice for effectiveness in the Gallup poll was **increased government spending on mental health screening and treatment**. In a recent presentation in Guilford by Senator Ed Meyer, the audience was told that this would not be possible in Connecticut because that state "is broke" and "can't afford it" and, besides, "**it would be unconstitutional**". It should be noted that the majority of individuals involved in mass shootings have been mentally disturbed; and, in most cases, if the proper identification and reporting of these individuals had been pursued, **they would not have been allowed** access to the weapons they ultimately used.

The third most effective approach in the poll was **decreasing the depiction of gun violence on TV, in movies, and in video games**. Many of the shooters, including the Newtown shooter, had been desensitized and programmed by movies and the violent video games they became addicted to. However, based on rulings by our judicial system and protests by Hollywood, apparently any action to restrict violence in the media would be rejected as a violation of First Amendment rights as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Banning the sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic guns was only rated fourth in effectiveness in the Gallup poll. Somehow, the people involved in this poll seem to have a whole different set of priorities than the political forces operating right now. Despite the fact that so-called "assault rifles" have only been used in a small fraction of homicides in the US; despite the fact that the Newtown shooting was only the first school shooting in which an AR-type rifle was used; and, despite the fact that the 1994 Clinton Assault Rifle Ban has been shown to be "of little or no effect" by several government-sponsored studies, there has been a vast upwelling of anti-gun sentiment with the misnamed "assault rifle" the primary focus of action.

While the banning of AR-type rifles as well as so-called "high capacity" magazines may be seen as a political necessity and make legislators feel that they are doing something, I propose that it will have little or nothing to do with the prevention of a recurrence of Sandy Hook. Indeed, the banning of all guns and magazines **would still not prevent a recurrence**. With over 300 million guns in the U S, half of which are not currently registered, **guns will always be available to the bad guys at a price**.

I have no doubt that this Legislature will pass some gun control measures. I can only ask that you remind yourselves that the purpose of any such legislation should be to provide **effective measures which will keep any weapons out of the hands of the "bad guys"**, those who are intent upon doing harm to our children or anyone else. These measures **should not be passed to prevent the "good guys"** from protecting their families or from enjoying hunting and shooting sports which are part of the heritage of our country.

While it seems that the constitutional rights of those with mental conditions and the constitutional rights of Hollywood are front and center and inviolable, please remember that 2nd Amendment rights and the rights of over 500,000 Connecticut gun owners are not, and should never be, free to be trampled on in the rush to legislate. Connecticut used to proudly call itself **The Gun State and The Constitution State**. Unless the Legislature shows some restraint, **Connecticut will be neither!**

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