

Though I am disappointed that this task force is short sighted in name as "Gun Violence" it would seem grants license to ignore the root cause of the problem which is Violence not Guns. In spite of this, these words are written to address the "Gun Violence" working group and they provide some suggests as they relate to guns. Though, if your actions are only focused on guns I fear your actions will be woefully inadequate.

Dear Members of the Violence Task Force,

I am writing to you today to ask for your help and for your understanding. I am one of many Connecticut residents employed in the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade. I am proud of the roles I have played throughout my career in this industry and am deeply troubled by the vitriol that is now being levied against this responsible and law-abiding industry, as well as the many thousands of responsible firearms owners in Connecticut.

We were all deeply affected by the horrific and despicable acts of Adam Lanza. And we all agree that we must do whatever we can to prevent evil acts like this from ever occurring again.

I believe that the root cause of this tragedy is a combination of many failures in a system ill-equipped to handle Connecticut's mentally ill, a shocking lack of responsibility by a gun owner who should have known better, and finally the evil acts of a deranged individual.

Unfortunately, some Connecticut legislators are going too far and are inappropriately exploiting this tragedy to introduce legislation that will not prevent future tragedies but will instead punish responsible firearm owners for the criminal acts committed by a deranged individual. Though some measures are more obnoxious than others - a 50% tax on ammunition, expensive registration schemes and outright bans on certain firearms, I fear none of the proposals I have seen to date will have any impact on future crimes. However they will certainly impact me and the many people like me who work in the firearms industry, along with the many others who share my passion for hunting traditions and America's firearm freedoms.

Working in the firearms industry for 20 years has provided me with a unique perspective. It is a point of view I fear far too few legislators have an opportunity to see, but one that makes me particularly proud. The firearms industry is a responsible industry. It is an industry that works diligently to improve safety and to encourage responsible firearms ownership.

In Connecticut the firearms industry is an important industry, providing 4,128 jobs and more than \$142-million in wages to its workers. The industry helps fuel the Connecticut economy with an economic impact of more than 305-million dollars, and more than \$36-million in state and local taxes. Based on my experience in this industry, I offer the following thoughts and suggestions.

Although we do not have all the facts about the storage practices of Mrs. Lanza, had she properly secured her firearms from the son she knew to be at risk, the Newtown Tragedy could have been avoided without the need for any additional gun-control laws or regulations. That is why I fully support credible public awareness campaigns that educate firearm owners about ways to secure their firearms and to prevent unauthorized access when they are not in use.

A great example of such a program is Project Childsafe, an industry sponsored program that has provided more than 35-million free firearm safety kits to gun owners across the country over the last decade. The program is managed by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which through partnerships with local police departments distributes safety kits that include a gun lock and safe

storage instructions. In fact, the last time I visited the Seymour Police Department, I saw Project Childsafe locks on display and readily available to the residents of our town. A credible state wide public safety campaign like Project Childsafe that educates gun owners and encourages safe storage will help keep firearms out of unauthorized hands and make Connecticut safer.

We must do all we can to ensure that criminals and mentally ill persons do not have access to firearms. This can be accomplished at the national level by focusing efforts on improving the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and at the state level by ensuring that Connecticut makes all relevant criminal and mental health files readily available and regularly updates them to the background check system.

We must also ensure that firearms do not fall into the hands of prohibited persons. Connecticut already requires a background check for every sale of new and used guns by licensed retailers and background checks on all private sales of handguns. Extending this requirement to long guns would help ensure that prohibited persons are not afforded access to firearms through private sales.

We must eliminate the illegal sale of firearms on the black market by increasing enforcement efforts, by cracking down on traffickers and by educating the public about the dangers of participating in a “straw purchase.” As you know, in a straw purchase a person who can pass a background check purchases a firearm for someone who can’t. That is exactly how the gunman in the recent first responder shooting in New York acquired his gun. I was pleased to see that the police arrested the young lady who bought the gun for him, and I hope that she will be fully prosecuted.

To help combat straw purchases, the industry in partnership with the ATF developed the “Don’t Lie For The Other Guy” program that takes a multi-pronged approach to this problem, including educating retailers about how to identify and deter straw purchases and warning the general public about the dangers and potential legal jeopardy of participating in illegal straw purchases.

Finally, we must do everything we can to uphold the rights of Connecticut’s citizens to ensure that they are able to fully enjoy their 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights.

Sadly, if the results of this horrific event are a ban on certain firearms and magazines, exorbitant taxes on ammunition and a further erosion of firearm freedoms, but no real efforts are undertaken to address the root causes of violent outbursts from people who are known to be dangerous, more tragic events like Newtown may occur.

I don’t envy your position and certainly understand that as a legislator you will feel the need to do “something” to prevent future events like Newtown from ever happening again. As your constituent, I expect nothing less. But I also ask that you consider the many thousands of Connecticut gun owners and the thousands of workers employed in the firearms industry in Connecticut at Charter Arms in Shelton, Colt’s Manufacturing Company in Hartford, O.F. Mossberg & Sons in North Haven, Remington Arms in Stamford, Savage Arms in Enfield, Stag Arms in New Britain, Sturm Ruger & Company in Southport, and at the National Shooting Sports Foundation in Newtown, and that you understand that we too have been deeply impacted by this tragic event.

You must recognize that it is possible to take meaningful steps that will help to prevent tragedies like Newtown from happening without violating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights of Connecticut’s citizens or negatively impacting the jobs of Connecticut’s workers.

When you strike this balance, you will not only be doing “something,” you’ll be doing the right thing.

David Miles  
6 Kulas Terrace  
Seymour, CT 0647