

To the Connecticut Gun Violence Prevention Working Group

Senators and Representatives,

First, I would like to thank you for your service to the great State of Connecticut, and your representation of your constituents.

Second, I would like to offer my opinions to assist your working group's activities.

We are all incredibly saddened by the tragic events that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown. We all feel the need to do something to prevent this from happening again.

However, some of the proposed legislation that is being debated would have had no effect on this tragedy, and our precious resources and rights should not be squandered on them. Bans on so called "assault weapons" would have had no effect. Bans on so called "high capacity" magazines, which are in fact standard capacity for many weapons would also have had no effect. A determined, crazed individual could easily have killed as many as he did with a bolt action "hunting" rifle and pistol using restricted capacity magazines. Reloading a rifle or pistol takes well less than a second. The reality is that his targets were unarmed women and children who could not defend themselves and the killer knew they would be unarmed, since the school was a gun free zone. The only thing that stopped the killing is when the killer heard the police sirens and decided to take his own life since he knew the good guys with guns were coming. In addition, there are so many of these weapons and magazines in the United States, that there will always be a black market for them, and criminals will always be able to obtain them.

Bans on standard capacity magazines and so called "assault weapons" would only serve to give criminals the exact same advantage that the killer had – superior firepower than their intended victims. The Connecticut Constitution Article I, Section 15 states that "Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state." My right to defend myself means that I should be allowed access to weapons and accessories that are in current common use and that will be commonly available to criminals, including standard capacity magazines, and AR-15 style rifles.

Other proposals for registration of firearms or permitting would have had no effect. The guns in this case were obtained legally by the killer's mother, and the killer stole them from her.

The only effect these proposed laws will have is to take away rights from law abiding citizens, and restrict my ability to defend myself and my family. Criminals do not follow laws, and crazy people don't either. Look no further than our failed drug policies - they have done nothing to prevent the widespread availability of common drugs such as marijuana. Instead of trying to pass laws to make us feel good and feel that we did something, but in reality only serve to strip the rights of law abiding citizens and increase the tax burden on the citizens as the police attempt to enforce these unenforceable laws, maybe we should try to address the root cause of the problem.

The State Police investigation is continuing. It would seem to me that we should wait until that report is released before acting. Several questions remain unanswered: Did Nancy Lanza store her firearms safely to prevent access by her apparently mentally ill son? What medication was the killer on? Had the killer made threats before this that were overlooked or not relayed to the proper authorities due to confidentiality laws? What was the extent and severity of the killer's mental illness or other developmental issue? Had treatment been sought and found not available due to cost, or patient resistance? Was the killer taking his prescribed medications? The answers will best determine a course of action that could have had an effect.

1. Assuming that the firearms weren't safely stored, put in place laws to require safe firearms storage if the household has mentally ill persons or children.
2. Assuming that there were prior threats, pass laws that require mental health providers and parents to report threats.
3. Assuming that the killer was mentally ill and did not receive adequate care, pass laws that will allow mentally ill people to be committed to care on an outpatient basis in addition to the current inpatient laws.

These are just a few suggestions. Please oppose any new "assault weapon" and "high capacity" magazine restrictions, or registration schemes. Again, I would encourage you to wait for the Police Report before making your final recommendations. Do not let emotion rule out over logical and well thought out legislation. Do not strip away the rights of many for the transgressions of one. Please pass legislation that will truly prevent this tragedy from reoccurring, and not "feel good" legislation that will do nothing to prevent further tragedies.

Respectfully,

David Peikes  
Citizen of Waterford, Connecticut