

To: The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group Jan. 28, 2013

Dear Sirs/Madams:

Reality shows us that there are people in our society of flawed character that do harm to others or whose judgment is altered by use of drugs who harm others while under their influence. And there are people who have mental disorders that seek to harm others out of anger or vengefulness or just plain evil. In a perfect world, we would not have to worry about such violence. But, it's not a perfect world. And so, we pass laws... but these laws must be sensible, focused, honest, effective, and Constitutional.

I am a professional woman and a law-abiding, responsible gun owner. Like others, I was horrified at the cowardly murders of innocent children at Sandy Hook Elementary. No parent should have to endure such pain, nor law enforcement and emergency responders have to witness such carnage. My heart goes out to them all.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts. The national and local dialogue that has ensued since that horrible December day seems to be focusing all of the blame on people like me...just ordinary citizens, law-abiding, responsible gun owners. Why? I did not cause this carnage. Penalizing me with new requirements for such things as liability insurance for gun ownership, psychological exams, repeated and expensive annual permit processes, publication of my name as a legal gun owner, extra taxes on ammunition or restrictions on its purchase, and laws that would make illegal a firearm or magazine I legally purchased are some of the proposals I've read. While these actions might make some anti-gun people feel better, they will only punish the law-abiding gun owners while doing nothing to prevent the acts of a madman or criminal intent on violence. I oppose all such proposals since they don't focus on the real problem...the criminals and those with violent mental disorders.

The current bills proposed to limit magazine capacity, or to limit what cosmetic features a firearm might have, will not reduce or eliminate gun violence. Such bills will only make criminals of otherwise law-abiding citizens who will be forced to choose between keeping a firearm they've chosen for protection and/or sport shooting, or risk becoming a criminal under some new firearm restriction. Limiting magazine capacity only serves to limit the chances that a victim of assault or home invasion will survive. The more you have to manipulate a firearm by changing a magazine, cocking a hammer, or reloading, the less likelihood you will survive an attack. Home invasions often involve multiple intruders; a limited size magazine only limit's the chances of a victim's survival. I also oppose the banning of certain firearms over others since a citizen should be able to use their chosen, legally purchased firearm for self protection or sport shooting. They should not be made to sell or get rid of a firearm or face legal action because of some cosmetic feature or because it holds some arbitrary number of rounds of ammunition which some ill-conceived law has determined is more than that firearm owner "needs." An individual's "needs" is a personal decision to be determined only by that individual; it is not for others to decide what I "need."

I think many lawmakers sometimes forget that not all of this State's citizens live in cities or towns with local police forces capable of responding quickly to a home invasion or assault. My town, for example, has no local police force or Resident State Trooper. It relies on the CT State Police whose barrack is 16.6 miles from my home, an estimated optimal travel time of 25 minutes, barring any delays. The common refrain... "when seconds count, police are only minutes away" takes on real meaning given this fact. My safety could be jeopardized by further restrictions on the type of firearm I'm allowed to own, and might define the value of my life by the number of chances (ie: rounds of ammunition) I'm allowed to have in order to protect myself. On any given day, this is immoral and, some would argue, unconstitutional. But to take such measures against every-day, law-abiding citizens in the name of increased school safety or for the collective "greater good" is just unethical and dishonest.

It's important to note that a firearm is a force equalizer for most women who are often at a physical disadvantage against an assailant. A firearm with a multiple round magazine in whatever capacity necessary to mitigate an assault (as determined by the personal choice of the firearm owner) is the first line of Rightful defense for any American citizen. They should not have to be at the mercy of a home invader or assailant while waiting for help to arrive because they were limited, by law, to an arbitrary amount of ammunition their firearm could hold.

I caution CT Legislators to not trample the 2nd Amendment Right of law-abiding citizens but rather focus on the criminals. Enact stricter penalties for criminals who use firearms; improve enforcement of existing gun laws; enhance school security to "harden the target" to discourage would-be murderers from viewing any school as any easy target with no means of defense; and remove "Gun Free Zones" which only serve as an "attractive nuisance" or invitation to cowardly murderers. I could support closure of some so-called "gun show loop holes" provided such laws do not infringe on private ownership rights as provided by current law. I also strongly support legislation to strengthen the State's mental health safety net so that those individuals with mental health issues, especially those with violent tendencies, and their family members have more assistance in gaining the mental health support they need. I support new legislation to provide data sharing on those who have been legally adjudicated by a recognized mental health authority and found to have a mental disorder which may result in violence to ensure they are not allowed to purchase a firearm. I would prefer that such legislation, should it come to pass, have provisions that would allow for a person affected by such a ruling the opportunity for appealing for reinstatement of his 2nd Amendment Right at some point.

Actions in these areas would do far more to enhance the safety and security of all of the citizens of the State of CT than any further abridgement of their 2nd Amendment Right.

Respectfully submitted for the record,
Debbie Catuccio
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