

Dear legislative member of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group,

I apologise if this is redundant; I tried to send this individually to each of you and was directed to the Task Force mailbox. Please pardon the length and my mediocre computer savvy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for holding the public hearing at the Legislative Office Building on 28 (and 29!) January 2013. I realize that a meeting of this marathon length is not an easy task even when not centered on such a volatile and divisive issue as gun violence. I can honestly say that I have gained a new respect for the magnitude of the tasks and pressures that are taken on by elected officials.

I have never attended a meeting like the one on Monday and I was not sure what to expect. I knew that voices from all sides of the issue would be present, and most significantly, that survivors of the victims of the Newtown massacre would be there to testify. While I had a definite stance on the issue that I wished to present, I was intentional about delivering my defense of it in a manner that was respectful and open to learning about the issue from different perspectives.

I drew lottery number 1494 which placed me in the second-to-last slot in the first list of names. As much as that put me in for a very long night, I am glad I did, because it gave me the opportunity to hear so many different stories and gain what I believe to be a balanced perspective on exactly where the people of Connecticut stand on this issue.

My impression of the meeting was that the solid, if not overwhelming, majority opinion regarding new restrictions on gun ownership, such as types of weapons, magazine capacity, restrictions and taxes on ammunition, registration of long guns, etc. was firm opposition to all of the above. I voiced a similar sentiment, and respectfully singled out HB 5112 (proposed public listing of pistol permit holders' names and addresses) as particularly offensive and futile. Furthermore, while I was disappointed by some of the conduct demonstrated at the meeting by some of the holders of these opinions, I had to conclude that the arguments they presented were cohesive, fact-based, and rooted in a firm adherence to constitutional law. In the case of several victims of violent crime and several police officers, they were also rooted in sobering personal experience.

I can assure you that I did not close my ears to the testimonies of gun-control advocates. I listened very carefully, and weighed my own convictions against what I heard. I was essentially preparing to undergo a radical shift in my opinions. I was particularly touched by the testimony of Southport resident Alice Stokes, who contrasted the right to keep and bear arms with the right to life. It was only after the meeting and several hours of reflection afterward that I realized that the reason that I support the first right so ardently is precisely because I cherish the right to life even more, and seek to preserve for myself and others the means to defend it when regrettably necessitated by the evil or misguided actions of those who do not.

If, all things considered, gun-control measures such as those proposed were not proven failures in curbing violence and not merely trading one type of violence for another, I would be a good bit more open to considering support for them, or at least a lack of opposition. I have long ago lost any heart I may have had for asking America to shoulder the risks inherent in the Second Amendment in order to preserve a hobby or a lifestyle. Those who have faced armed aggressors first-hand, and those who look with a troubled eye at what history shows to follow any dilution of the power of a free people to arm themselves, do not look to the Second Amendment to preserve such. They look, as I do, to the same as exactly what I called it before – the means to preserve and defend the right to life.

In light of this, I implore you, please do not proceed with any proposal to further restrict the defensive capabilities of law-abiding citizens. I urge you instead to focus whatever resources you were counting on to implement new restrictions into tightening enforcement of existing laws which would make undeniable strides toward less gun violence and increased public safety. Listening to testimony from police officers, crime victims, and state officials who specialize in firearms-related issues, I have learned that the current rate of enforcement is abysmal, as detailed by CT Office of Legislative Research Report No. 2007-R-0442 (<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/rpt/2007-R-0442.htm>). I believe that improving our state's dismal track record of holding violators accountable is reversed, fewer Adam Lanzas will fall through the cracks, and residents of urban areas will have greater safety and latitude to determine their own lives without fear of encroachment by gangs and drug dealers.

If current laws are almost uniformly ignored, it is irresponsible to direct efforts toward new ones. Do not propose to restrict those who pose no threat while those whose actions prove that they do are allowed to continue those actions unabated. Such is an insult not only to responsible citizens, but to the law enforcement officers who apprehend these violators, whom I would assume you would also task with enforcing any new restrictions. It is no small matter to direct people who risk their lives and shoulder heavy personal and professional burdens to divert their efforts from stopping real criminals to the unsavoury – and illegal - job of disarming those who are not criminals except according to unjust legislation that flies in the face of both the U.S. and Connecticut Constitutions.

The people of Connecticut have spoken. The Constitution of our state, as well as that of our nation, is unambiguous. Please respect the plain truth of this. I thank you again for the opportunity to address you and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

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New London, Connecticut

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