

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF EDITH CASSIDY  
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Twenty years ago two children in two separate incidents were gunned down during recess in the playground of my neighborhood school. These atrocities were the culmination of a series of murders of Bridgeport's school children which were so frequent that the superintendent, Jim Connolly, bemoaned the fact that he was now attending weekly funerals of school children. Following the murders, at a packed neighborhood meeting, the chief of police pleaded with the community to do two things:

1. Petition the state legislature to pass a ban on assault weapons so police could arrest suspected criminals who they knew harbored these deadly weapons
2. Create a safety net of afterschool and recreation programs to get kids off the street.

Bridgeport did both, and gradually the shootings and murders decreased and children once again were seen on playgrounds, soccer and little league fields and mothers brought their preschoolers to totlots and water parks.

In the recent years that aura of safety has been eroded in our urban areas. The arms industry soon found loopholes in the original assault weapons ban and military weapons and military ammunition magazines, while perhaps legally bought, have made their way into illegal hands in our urban neighborhoods. Not so in our suburbs. There legally purchased military weapons are in the hands of legal owners and the rest is history. Since Sandy Hook six weeks ago over 740 Americans have been victims of gun violence. Military weapons and ammunition have no place in hands of civilians. Connecticut needs to be an assault weapons free zone (no grandfathering) and show courageous leadership to the rest of the country.

The day after the assault weapons ban was passed 20 years ago a school teacher in a Bridgeport school passed the locker of sixth grader. She noticed the door of his locker was pasted with pictures of assault rifles. When questioned, the 6<sup>th</sup> grader told her his dream was to "own all those guns". She informed him about the assault weapons ban that had passed the night before and now all those guns were illegal. The child was stunned. The next day when the teacher passed the child's locker she noted that the pictures of guns had been replaced by picture of famous football players! If assault weapons were not available for public consumption lives would be saved and an incremental step would be taken to diffuse our culture of violence. I saw it happen 20 years ago; it can happen again.

Thank you  
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