

To Connecticut's Task Force on Gun Violence:

I echo the calls of so many concerned Connecticut citizens for rational legislation and programs to lessen the gun violence in our state and our nation. Yes, we must see to mental health issues and the question of whether media violence is causative of actual violence. But I believe the first priority is dealing with the guns, which are responsible not only for homicides but for even more suicides.

My first priority would be for full background checks for all gun sales, including internet and private person sales. A more comprehensive data base is needed for this.

Second, I would empower and fund agencies to study and report on the nature and extent of gun violence, as a public health issue.

I would limit ammunition clips to a maximum of 10 and perhaps fewer bullets.

I would require permits to purchase ammunition, justification for larger amounts, and taxation on ammunition to help fund the safety programs.

I would require safety education programs, and include legislation requiring safe storage. My state senator, L.Scott Frantz, is proposing safe storage in households with persons at risk. I applaud him but believe this should apply to all households, with perhaps liability applied to gun owners if their weapons are ill-used by others with access.

Technological improvements can make guns child-safe and even matched to the owners' hand-prints or other ID in order to shoot.

Assault weapons, enjoyed for sport, should be limited to shooting ranges, and not permitted to leave those premises.

Stricter enforcement to negate gun trafficking is essential to limit criminal use.

Those who choose to and can pass inspection, can have their weapons for personal protection and for sport, but the rest of us should be protected. Connecticut is now in a position, and has an obligation, to be a leader in this effort. Whether for criminal use of guns, or suicides, or headline-making mass murders, the United States has become an object lesson in what not to do. We should be a model in how to live our lives. We can do this in freedom, but with reasonable regulation to protect the rights of others, just as we regulate rights to free speech, and assembly, and other constitutional rights, in order to protect the rights of others. I am proud to live in Connecticut, as I am proud to be an American, and I look forward to seeing the comprehensive plan that our lawmakers, now in bipartisan effort, will achieve.

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