

Testimony to the Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety
Relevant to the Public Hearings on Gun Safety at Newtown High School (January 30, 2013)
by Eric Poupon, 23 Split Rock Rd, Newtown CT
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My name is Eric Poupon and I live in Newtown.

I want to thank all of the councils for being here today and listening to everyone's opinions, especially Mitch, Dan, and Debra who represent us as a community.

I would like to voice my support to the current proposals for tighter gun control in Connecticut including:

- A Ban on assault rifles
- A Ban on large capacity magazines which hold more than 7 rounds
- Universal background checks or a holding period before a gun can be purchased.
- Mental health checks for all gun owners and their families
- Funding of programs to provide more options for families who are affected by mental health issues.
- I also support legislation that will better regulate the use of guns by lawful gun owners on private property, preferably through defining gun range requirements and mandating inspections.

Today I wanted to talk about a dire situation in Newtown for myself, my neighborhood and other neighborhoods in Newtown. Practically every week, my family and I have to experience long periods of uncontrolled shooting by various gun owners who surround us on other properties. Sometimes this shooting will last up to 8 to 9 hours in a single day of non-stop shooting with semi-automatic weapons of various size and caliber. After filing complaints with the local police, what I have found is shocking. As a citizen I have absolutely no ability or no rights to affect the situation at the local, state or federal level. This situation must change.

On January 6th of this year our neighborhood experienced the inevitable. A person working on a neighbor's roof was actually hit with a bullet coming from "recreational" shooting occurring on the property near us.

This situation is a shocking reality that not only is the shooting creating continued mental health issues for our children in the wake of the events of December 14th 2012, but I quickly realized this is a life or death situation on any given day. My children and the children of others in this town are in tremendous danger due to the lack of safety regulations in the use of firearms on private land. These are the same firearms which are now being questioned at a federal level whether they should even be owned by civilians.

I had thought that I had a right, as a tax-paying citizen, to complain about this potential hazard and that it would be taken seriously but much to my dismay I have been told by members of the police force, including our chief, as well as high ranking members of our legislative council, that the current laws and regulations give me NO rights to prevent this situation from happening.

So I have to ask, are we really at the point where the rights of gun owners and the fear of losing ground on the second amendment allows for gun owners to do as they will, when and where they will. Putting others, including children, in danger at any time? I am not certain about this but I believe that in Connecticut, I have more rights to call upon law enforcement to prevent someone from shooting fireworks near my home than I do to prevent someone from blasting away with a semi-automatic weapon 500 feet from my house. That is how the current legislation in Newtown is currently written.

Those that I have talked to on the police force and in our legislative councils are clear. They do not feel they have the capacity to change things on their own at a local level. They and we in this room are looking to **all of you** to help with enacting a set of changes which will, in turn, give them the ability to enact the types of changes which can make our town safer. These changes can provide our police officers the ability to act in these situations and protect every citizen in our town. Currently, our police officers seem to be only allowed to protect gun owners and that is simply not right. I know Newtown is not alone in this struggle.

I strongly believe these tighter gun controls will prevent future tragedies like the one in Newtown on December 14th, 2012. As like any other foundation of change it will take time for these laws to take hold and have long term effects as it did with other long term campaigns for change such as drunk driving, or health awareness. I do not consider any of these proposals to be knee jerk reactions. I consider them be a start to changing the mentality of this country and this community about how we perceive the need for guns, and these changes will absolutely prevent more violence over time.

I urge you to move forward as it will give life to the many discussions and compromises that need to be made in Newtown and in communities across this state to make our own changes. Give our elected officials and law enforcement groups the chance to protect ALL of its citizens and the same time, possibly prevent another tragedy like on December 14th, 2012.

Thank you all for your time.

Eric Poupon