

Jan 28, 2013

Dear Chairman Looney and Chairman Miner, and members of the Gun Violence Prevention working group,

Thank you for hearing public input on this subject of such high importance to the community. We are all united in determination to prevent the unspeakable crimes that took place in Newtown from ever happening again. It is a complex problem. I believe solutions include better supervision of persons with mental illness, armed security officers at schools, permitting school staff the option, if they wish, of carrying firearms, tasers or pepper spray, and modifications to buildings like wire reinforced glass. However, I oppose firearm bans and registration. That would not have stopped Adam Lanza, and would not make us safer as a community.

There are apparently many misconceptions in the general public about what have been called "assault weapons". They are not "machine guns". They are semi-automatic rifles that fire only one shot when the trigger is pulled, like a revolver. They are not "high powered" compared to other firearms. They use the same ammunition as is used for hunting and target shooting. They are not military rifles or used by the military. They have similar cosmetic features as military weapons like pistol grips, flash suppressors and barrel shrouds, but these do not make the rifle more lethal. Pistol grips are quite common in competitive shooting sports, and it does not seem reasonable to define such rifles as "assault weapons." The website www.assaultweapon.info has an informative slideshow explaining these facts.

In a recent national news story, on Jan. 4, 2013, an intruder used a crowbar to break into the Loganville Georgia home of Melinda Herman. She grabbed her children, twin 9 year old boy and girl, and a revolver, and hid in an upstairs crawlspace. The intruder went upstairs, pried open another door, and then opened the door to the crawl space. You can imagine what a frightening situation this must have been for Mrs. Herman and her children. She fired all 6 shots from her revolver and hit him 5 times. He fled the house and drove away, then ran into a wooded area where he was captured by police. This is a striking point of the story. The assailant was shot five times yet not only survived but had the strength to flee the house, drive down the street, and run out of the car. Mrs. Herman had only six shots. Imagine if there were two assailants, or if her aim had been less accurate in such a stressful situation. The story could have had a very different and brutally tragic outcome for Mrs. Herman and her children. Anyone who could imagine themselves in this terrifying situation I am sure would prefer to have more than 6 shots. Here also is a case of someone who could have been protected by a rifle with a short barrel and telescoping stock for maneuverability in a tight crawlspace. All these features would classify a firearm as an "assault weapon". Mrs. Herman's story is not an isolated incident. Estimates range up to 2.5 million times a year that firearms are used to stop crimes. Mrs. Herman is a hero who defended her children's lives. Self defense is a fundamental right, as are property rights which include firearm ownership. It is for these reasons that I oppose firearm bans and registration that would force people to surrender their property. Contrary to making the community safer, bans are likely to make us less safe. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration on these important issues.

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