

My name is Francine Larson. I live in Madison, CT. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Like every other morning, today I turned my television onto the Today Show to hear the headlines. One of the lead stories was of an ongoing hostage situation in Alabama where a man boarded a school bus and attempted to take several young children hostage. The bus driver intervened and was shot and killed. The man was able to take one six year old boy off the bus and to an underground bunker. A standoff was in progress with the man, boy and authorities.

Another day, another group of young children, with us along with them from afar, being terrorized by someone with a gun.

WHEN WILL IT STOP??

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR US TO WAKE UP FROM THE STUPOR OF SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS AT ALL COSTS??

I have never felt afraid in my own country. Even after 9/11. But, I do now. I am afraid.

When I go to the movies, I find myself looking around to locate the exits and wondering if I chose a lucky seat.

When I go to the mall, I find myself looking around wondering if a madman with an assault weapon is amongst the shoppers.

When I am driving my car, if I mistakenly cut someone off, I wonder if the driver will pull out a gun in anger.

When my three young grandsons go to school each day in Wilton, CT, I wonder if they will have a day free from gunfire.

Is this how I am supposed to live??? Is this how we, as a country, want to live.

With all of the task forces here tonight, I acknowledge that this is a complex issue, which will require much time before successful results are realized. But, part of the solution is a simple equation that can be implemented quickly. Less lethal guns and ammunitions plus stricter means of ownership and access = less death.

Despite protests to the contrary, it is really that simple. That is a fact that has been proven by other democracies around the world in response to mass shootings.

Those democracies regulate guns, preserve their freedoms and achieve firearm murder rates that are a tiny fraction of those in America. Check with the citizens of the UK, Australia and Japan; ask them if they feel oppressed as a result of strict gun regulation or just a little safer from mass shootings in their schools, malls, movie theaters, churches and temples.

To those here tonight who are afraid their Second Amendment rights are in jeopardy.....we have something in common. I am afraid too. With that commonality in mind, I say this. I do not want confrontation. I want consensus. To that end, I extend my hand. Is there just one of you....perhaps one of you wearing a yellow sticker....who is willing to take it in a spirit of consensus. What are we both willing to give up so that each of us can be satisfied that our rights are being preserved?

Is there one of you??? Because if there is one, there may be two. And, if two, maybe 10. And, if that can happen in this town, than maybe in another town, in another state. And.....who knows....by some miracle maybe it can happen in the town of Washington, DC.

My name is Francine Larson. I live in Madison, CT. And, my hand remains extended...

Thank you....