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To the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group:

My name is Gary Willett from East Hartford, CT. I have been a police officer in this state for 29 years now.

The shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School were a tragic and senseless assault on the innocent. As a parent, it shocks the conscious and there are no words to express the deep sadness that envelopes us all. No thought process could comprehend the loss of these sons, daughters and loved ones at that the school that day.

That being said, the human cry for “a law” to prevent this type of assault from ever happening again is a feel good effort at best. I wish it was that simple. The plain truth of the matter is that anyone hell bent on destruction is going to find a means to their end. Human beings have freewill; there is no way around that.

By banning AR-15 style firearms and limiting capacity of magazines, only the law abiding citizen will comply, the criminal will continue to have whatever weapon they wish, with whatever round count magazine they desire. The criminal doesn't buy their weaponry from the nearest gun shop; they purchase their weapons off the street. Banning certain items will only further create an underground market, benefiting the criminals.

Another issue is that of the lack of enforcement of current gun laws. Do we enforce the gun laws that are already on the books? Why are firearm charges so easily pleaded away? I suggest that we enforce the current gun laws and tighten up prosecution of same. There should be serious mandatory sentences for those committing a crime with a firearm.

Another issue is with Connecticut's release of violent felons. Why are we releasing violent individuals who then go out and kill? Recent examples being Resto in Meriden and Mendez in East Hartford. Both men had recently been released from prison under the state's new "Risk Reduction Earned Credit Program." News reports state “The Malloy administration says despite the recent tragedies, it's working.” (<http://www.wtnh.com/dpp/news/politics/lawmakers-debate-early-prison-release-program>) How are two murders a sign that the program is “working”? What if those had been children, instead of convenience store employees?

Other ideas we've heard of is a requirement for liability insurance on firearms. Then I heard a radio interview where the author of such a bill says that the police require a search and seizure warrant to go into someone's home. He stated that an insurance adjuster would not need such a warrant and could go into to people's homes to check on such things as storage, legal compliance, etc. This is illegal. Basically it is government sponsored search by civilians. A violation of the 4th Amendment to the Constitution. Seems that is the actual reason behind a proposal to require insurance, more control, more inventory, more identification.

What I do agree with is requiring the same process/regulations for purchasing long arms as we currently have for handguns. Rifles transactions should require an instant check, same as handguns. Person to person sales should require paperwork as currently required for handguns.

I also agree with a person being required to show his/her permit, hunting license, safety certificate, etc. for the purchase of ammunition.

Lets not make current firearms owners criminals, let us not "tax" firearms needlessly, let us make sure that sales transactions are tightened up and that no one falls through the cracks. That is what we are trying to accomplish here, safety, not raising revenues.

As been said over and over by many people, gun owners are responsible, safe, productive, tax paying members of society. Do not legislate us into being criminals, do not tax us into poverty. We are the "good guys". Restricting the rights of law-abiding gun owners is the wrong solution to reduce violent crime or prevent criminal access to firearms. I also do not believe firearm owners should be photographed and fingerprinted like a common criminal for ownership of an "assault" type weapon. I also do not believe there is any legitimate reason for publishing, or making public, the list of names and addresses of carry permit holders. As in New York, all that caused were problems and also may have been the info needed to commit at least two burglaries of firearms in that state.

I wonder what the media would say if we proposed infringement on their 1st Amendment rights? The media loves to glorify such horrific crimes giving criminals and psychopaths, not just their "15 minutes of fame", but months of fame. I believe the President of the United States was on air in a little over an hour after the shooting at Sandy Hook. Unbalanced individuals looking to make a name for themselves, taking their anger out on society, are bombarded by the news and see how much attention these incidents receive.

Another example of media exposure is the recent finding of a .22 caliber bullet at a school in Enfield. The school was locked down, bomb squads were called, a big deal was made and the news covered every little bit of the incident. The next day someone finds a bullet on a school bus in Stafford. You don't think exposure by the media is putting ideas in people's heads? What if we started infringing on the 1st Amendment and require media to not report such things. It is a slippery slope.

Please support the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution, which you took an oath to uphold. The Right to Bear Arms is in the State of Connecticut Constitution as well. Please do not violate our Bill of Rights.

Thank you for representing me,

Gary A. Willett, Jr.