

TOWN of WESTON, CONNECTICUT



Incorporated 1787

Office of the First Selectman
Testimony of Gayle Weinstein

To the

Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention

January 28, 2013

Thank you for holding this public hearing and for allowing me to provide testimony in favor of stronger gun control laws for the State of Connecticut. The tragic events in Newtown may have been the impetus for the creation of this task force, but it is certainly not the only reason it is necessary. How many more people have to be massacred in schools, shopping malls and movie theatres before those of us who are in a position to create laws, actually act? I truly hope that this is the year that our State and Federal Elected Officials take action swiftly. We must be cognizant that all eyes are on Connecticut.

The Town of Weston is just a stone's throw away from Newtown. Our police officers were among the first on the scene, providing mutual aid, during that tragic day when 26 people were massacred, 20 of whom were children who haven't even reached the double digits. I am keenly aware that it just as easily could have happened in my town.

In response, our Board of Selectmen felt it was incumbent on us to review and update our current Gun Control Ordinance that was crafted back in 1990. We were, and continue to be, concerned about three broad areas:

1. After much discussion with local law enforcement, hunters and gun owners, we are convinced that the only reason to own an assault weapon capable of shooting more than 10 rounds is to kill people. Therefore, we ask that the State of Connecticut ban the possession of all assault weapons with large capacity magazines, consistent with the laws recently passed in New York.
2. We want to ensure that gun owners, especially those with children, properly store their weapons in a secure manner, preferably in a metal locked box. Currently, Connecticut State Statute requires that loaded firearms must be stored in a secure location if there is a minor in the house under the age of 16. We ask that you clearly define "secure location" and consider raising the age to 18.

3. We believe it is important to have all firearms registered, including long guns. Registration of all weapons should have an annual renewal, including an annual background check and the requirement that the owner stipulate that the gun(s) are still in their possession. We also believe that it is important to create a central database of all ammunition purchased. Because the public nature of this information could create safety concerns for gun owners and non-gun owners alike, we believe that this information should remain confidential and not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Given the proposals that are being recommended on the State and National level, including the work of this task force, the Board agreed that we should defer our decisions so that our laws can be consistent with the rest of the State.

I can't imagine the pressure you are under from the pro-gun lobby. I was completely shocked at the National response to what we were proposing in our small town. The NRA put us directly in their sight, and we received a tremendous amount of phone calls and emails from around the country. But this public hearing is about listening to the residents of this State, and not National lobbying organizations.

As you begin to craft legislation or not, please ask yourselves the question that I ask myself about every vote on the Board...will you be able to sleep at night with the decisions you've made?