

I am writing today as a concerned citizen and law-abiding gun owner.

I ask that you not pass any laws that further restrict my rights and do nothing to make the citizens of Connecticut safer. Unfortunately, most of the bills I have seen, and already written in opposition of this past week, do just that.

I will start out by saying this: Guns are not the problem, law abiding gun owners are not the problem. Nor are so-called "assault weapons" or "high-capacity magazines".

The real problem is the fact that little can be done about known "crazies" until they actually hurt someone. The problem is that there is no armed security and that the good guys are banned from carrying firearms to protect our children in schools. Madmen and criminals do not comply with "gun free zone" signs. Nor do they care how many laws they are breaking in the midst of committing horrific acts of violence.

What we need to do is work on the laws that prevent people who need help from getting it. We need to protect our children as we protect our banks, politicians, and corporations.

Some legislators, media, and anti-gun groups say things like, "These weapons are only designed to kill many people as quickly as possible."

This statement is completely biased and untrue. In addition to self-defense (and the defense of others), firearms like the modern day AR-15 are used in competitive or recreational shooting, sporting and for other lawful purposes. I know many would refute this, but I ask If it were true that only people who want to kill large amounts of people quickly would need them - then why do our police have them? The answer is simple: Because the bad guys have them and law enforcement must be on equal footing as them. Criminals will not turn in their illegal firearms, nor will they register them. So, all these proposed bans, regulations and registrations would only affect the law abiding gun owner.

The same people say, "You don't need 30 bullets to kill a deer."

The hunting argument has been put forth for years as if that is the purpose of the second amendment. Hunting was not, and is not, the purpose of the second amendment.

Anti-Gun groups, such as CT Against Gun Violence are willfully and purposely spreading disinformation in an attempt to blur the line between Modern military-style weapons and actual military weapons. Their recently released FAQ is full of half-truths and outright lies. I can safely say I could easily write for 10 pages and refute each and every statement in their FAQ with facts and numbers to back myself up. In fact, I am sure many have submitted testimony or will speak today doing just that.

Instead, I will just say this: The term "Assault Weapon" was invented by the anti-gun lobby to muddy the waters between military-style semi-automatics, which fire once per trigger pull, and selective-fire assault rifles, which can be set to fire continuously. Since the term has no meaning independent of the laws that define it, there is little sense in saying the laws should be changed to cover more "Assault Weapons." No firearm is an "Assault Weapon" until legislators arbitrarily decide they are. In effect, these rifles would be (as many already have been) banned simply because of their looks. These rifles all share ammunition with other traditional wood-stocked hunting rifles. According to the Anti-Gun lobby, those traditional rifles are "fine" (for now) even though they are no more or less deadly in the hands of criminals and madmen than these "Assault Rifles".

The second amendment is constantly being whittled and chipped away at by those who believe it shouldn't exist. This is known among lawful gun owners as Incrementalism. The end game of this is, of course, the eventual banning and seizure of all firearms. See: "How to Ban Guns: A step by step, long term process"(1)

The horrific act that prompted this new wave of gun control bills and laws has prompted people to try to "do something." Unfortunately, guns, and lawful gun owners, are being blamed and punished for the acts of a single madman and his misguided mother. Lawful citizens are the only ones who are already paying the price. These people, like me, are not insane, deranged, or criminal and I would very much appreciate it if lawmakers stopped treating all law-abiding gun owners as if we were.

We all know, but many seem to ignore, that if all firearms in the world were to suddenly disappear murders would not disappear with them. The gun did not make the madman do what he did. Some here would argue that it made it easier for him to do it - but I would argue that, had he used explosives (of which the instructions to make can be easily found on the internet) or even Molotov cocktails, the number of victims could have been even higher.

Some bills and ideas being talked about are an increase in taxes, permit fees, renewal fees, shortening of times between renewals, new permits for shotguns and rifles, new permits to purchase ammunition, yearly fees on firearm ownership, new permits for rifles with a pistol grip, a ban on online ammunition purchases, and mandated liability insurance for all lawful gun owners. All of these bills are designed to discourage and financially limit (or outright prevent) the poor, struggling and lower class from exercising their Second Amendment Rights and placing undue financial burden on middle and upper class individuals who choose to exercise that right. Should the poor and struggling citizens of Connecticut have less of a chance to exercise their rights and protect themselves than the wealthy?

These bills only serve to financially penalize and discourage the lawful owning, carrying and use of firearms. Law abiding gun owners are not the problem - criminals and illegal guns are. They also are a tax on a fundamental right - something which is illegal and unconstitutional (example: Poll Taxes).

Other bills call for registration of all firearms in the state. Lawful gun owners are against this for obvious reasons. The only reason someone would want to know where the guns were would be the eventual seizing of them. This has already happened in Canada, England and other countries, so it is not mere "paranoia". This seizure would, of course, not get the illegal guns out of the hands of criminals - since they wouldn't have ever registered their illegal firearms.

Other bills, as I previously mentioned, call for the expansion of the "assault weapon" definition or outright ban of most modern day sporting rifles. New York Times reporter Erica Goode notes that the rifle used in the Sandy Hook tragedy is modeled after the Colt AR-15, a civilian version of the M16, and that guns of this type are "the most popular rifle in America," with an estimated 3.3 million to 3.5 million sold since 1986. According to a 2011 survey of gun dealers by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, 49 percent of AR-15-style rifles were purchased for target shooting, 23 percent for hunting, and 28 percent for personal protection. These supposed "weapons of war" clearly have legitimate uses, which far outnumber criminal ones. Goode notes that rifles of any kind were used in less than 3 percent of all homicides last year.

Recently, after NY State passed its SAFE Act, NY Sheriff's said the following about its new reclassification of "Assault Weapons":

"We believe that the new definition of assault weapons is too broad, and prevents the possession of many weapons that are legitimately used for hunting, target shooting and self defense. Classifying firearms as assault weapons because of one arbitrary feature effectively deprives people the right to possess firearms which have never before been designated as assault weapons. We are convinced that only law abiding gun owners will be affected by these new provisions, while criminals will still have and use whatever weapons they want." (2)

Additionally, in *Heller v. District of Columbia* the Supreme Court case defines the Second Amendment as protecting:

1. from infringement by the federal and state governments
2. the right of the individual to keep and to bear
3. a weapon which is part of the ordinary military equipment or which use could contribute to the common defense. (3)

Again, in *United States v. Miller* 1939, Miller possessed a sawed-off shotgun banned under the National Firearms Act. He argued that he had a right to bear the weapon under the Second Amendment, but the Supreme Court ruled against him. Why? At the time, sawed-off shotguns were not being used in a military application, and the Supreme Court ruled that since it didn't, it was not protected. The Miller case set the precedent that protected firearms have a military, and thus a legitimate and protected Militia use. (4)

Both of these Supreme Court cases obviously rule in the *favor* of lawful citizens owning these so-called "Military-Styled Assault Weapons".

In regards to setting an arbitrary limit on magazine capacity:

Magazine limits would not have saved lives in Sandy Hook. As it is, the shooter had to reload his 30-round magazines during the attack. Since the six adults killed in Sandy Hook were spread throughout the building and the shooter did not encounter more than two at a time, having to reload every 10 shots instead of every 30 would not have saved any lives. In fact, recent reports indicate the shooter frequently changed magazines before they were empty.

After the expiration of the 1994 Assault Weapons ban a comprehensive study by the Centers for Disease Control - hardly a pro-gun entity - looked at the full panoply of gun-control measures, including the ban on magazines over 10 rounds, and concluded that none could be proven to reduce crime. Another study, commissioned by Congress, found that bans were not effective since "the banned weapons and magazines were never used in more than a modest fraction of all gun murders."

Again, in NY the Sherrif's response to the NY SAFE Act's reduced magazine capacity was:

"Reduction of ammunition magazine capacity. The new law enacts reductions in the maximum capacity of gun magazines. We believe based on our years of law enforcement experience that this will not reduce gun violence. The new law will unfairly limit the ability of law-abiding citizens to purchase firearms in New York. It bears repeating that it is our belief that the reduction of magazine capacity will not make New Yorkers or our communities safer." (2)

I understand the feeling of the "need to do something" many feel after the tragedy. But I do not think passing laws that limit and only affect the rights of law abiding citizen is the correct response.

When it comes to restricting the rights and freedoms of law-abiding citizens, the burden of proof should be on legislators to show significant public good that would result. Citizens should not have to demonstrate a need for that particular right - just as the onus in the criminal justice system is for prosecutors to prove guilt and not on defendants to prove innocence. "I don't see why you would need a 10+-round magazine" or "Why does a person need an AR15" are not valid reasons to make such magazines or firearms illegal - unless there is also sufficient evidence to prove that banning them will create a real and significant public benefit. As can be seen in the above points, no such public benefit exists.

Personally, I think a much better course of action would be to strengthen the punishments and minimum sentences for gun-related crimes. That way criminals convicted of these crimes would get stiffer penalties and law abiding citizens would be unaffected and their rights intact. This is the way our criminal and legal

system is supposed to work. We also need to make it easier for unstable citizens to get the help they need.

I am all for creating and, more importantly, enforcing laws that punish criminals and create a safer society. These proposed bills do not accomplish that. Instead they only serve to discourage lawful gun ownership, demonize gun owners and possibly make criminals out of ordinary people who choose to exercise a fundamental right that a minority of the US population may disagree with.

Thank You All for Your Time:

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Sources:

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(2) <http://oswegocountytoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/sheriffs-response-to-NY-SAFE-Act.pdf>

(3) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_of_Columbia_v._Heller

(4) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_v._Miller