

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and add my comments regarding gun safety and legislation in Connecticut.

Allow me to provide you some details about myself. I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut who has served in the Connecticut National Guard and instructed many soldiers in the tenets of basic rifle marksmanship and safety. I am a hunter and sport shooter. I am a federally licensed collector of firearms and a current Connecticut handgun permit holder. A family man with a wife, two sons, and gainfully employed.

I, like you all, was shocked to my very core at the senseless violence that was perpetrated at Sandy Hook Elementary School. As a friend later recounted to me, this tragedy seemed tailor made to illicit revulsion in my very soul. My sister in law works one town over teaching Kindergartners. I have first and fourth grade children who have the same first names as two of the victims, I have several friends and family that work in education and finally, I own an AR-15 rifle.

In the weeks after this tragedy I had to find some degree of reason to recenter my world view. This was such a tragedy that yes, I have come to agree that everything is different after Sandy Hook. I needed to start from the beginning with my opinions and with my outlook. I, like you, needed to try to find a solution.

I too, started with the firearms. Was my inalienable right to own my firearms in some way suspect? If there were no firearms, would this have resolved this tragedy? Would the NRA's position that 'more guns are the answer' provide a solution? What if there were laws that said only one bullet were allowed? Perhaps if there were more stringent controls in place would this have preempted the tragedy?

The solution that I came to was one that I had hoped would blend our rights under The Constitution with an enhanced measure of safety while remaining enforceable.

After a great deal of discussion with friends and strangers, gun enthusiasts and people who feel all guns should be outlawed, family and peers; the conclusion I have come to is that there are some areas of legislation that could be tightened and some areas that would be onerous and unenforceable if enacted.

I support background checks for all firearm purchases. I would also support a nominal fee for these background checks (not a tax, a transfer fee).

I would not be in favor of a permitting process for all firearms as this would bring undue bureaucracy and cause further expense on the state's part, however; as a handgun permit holder I would suggest that the possession of a handgun license be the defacto standard if such a permitting process were to be enacted.

I would further suggest that if the consensus of the citizens is interested in an "assault weapons" ban (after a referendum, perhaps?) that there be a 'grandfathering' of all current firearms and high capacity magazines. Anything less than a grandfathering would amount to an ex post facto law that would be challenged for being unconstitutional.

I do not support the "assault weapons ban". The features that qualify a weapon as deadly have nothing to do with the weapon's appearance. Banning weapons based on ancillary features (like bayonet lugs and flash hiders) is tantamount to banning bicycle riders from wearing professional helmets because they will ride too fast; cosmetic features that do not bear on the weapon's effectiveness. An object's appearance makes it no more or less deadly any more than a vehicle's exterior can enable it to go faster.

A great deal of thought has gone into my position that a high capacity magazine ban, while appealing on the outside; will do nothing to further safety as many well practiced individuals can

make use of a ten (or less) round magazine to meet their target. Please remember, the weapons that were used by the Soviets to defeat the Germans on the Eastern Front held only 5 rounds and, the weapons our troops carried in World War 1 were only capable of holding only 5 rounds.

In summation, I would like to state that further personal accountability and background checking in relation to firearms and their purchase is the direction we as a state should move in, this may aid in the reduction of gun violence. We should not, however, restrict or abridge the rights of citizens by enacting laws that would turn law abiding citizens into criminals by banning the possession of previously purchased items or mandating their sale or confiscation. We should also abstain from a rush to judgement by enacting onerous laws that govern citizen's actions such as how many firearms they purchase in a month or a minimum distance from a domicile they can responsibly shoot on their own property. We must not trade liberty for perceived safety, as we will loose both in the trade.

Please focus on keeping weapons out of the hands of individuals who may cause others harm and not out of the hands of people who are constitutionally allowed to possess them.

There are no easy answers, we in Connecticut have some of the most stringent gun laws in the nation and this horror still happened here and not elsewhere where gun laws are lax by comparison. I, in my search for understanding in this nightmare have come to the conclusion that there is evil in this world that would not be stopped by any law we could pass and, by rushing to pass laws just to try to remedy the past we will sacrifice our future and it's liberties. I do not want my children to grow up in an armed camp. I also do not want them to grow up thinking that the state will always be there to protect them. Somewhere in between is where we must land. Somewhere in between is a set of laws and policies that will prevent the lawless from harming others and the lawful from undue regulation. This is your charge, this is your sworn responsibility and I humbly ask you to please take my opinion into account.

Thank you for your time and attention, thank you for your service and your consideration.

Harold Nelson
Lebanon, Connecticut