

January 28, 2013

Mr. Chairman, and esteemed commission members:

My name is Henry Altman. I am an Architect, a parent, a gun owner, and a volunteer range officer.

I have 5 main points I'd like to offer for your consideration:

1. Emotional responses are not fair! Facts need to guide legislation, not emotion.

The tragedy at Newtown was appalling. As a parent of three, I grieve with those families. Of course everyone wants to keep children safe. But citizens and legislators can NOT be swept up in the current "mob mentality", which occurs when people are scared or angry. We must follow the rules of law, assess the facts, do the research and STOP THIS WITCH HUNT against gun owners before freedoms are compromised forever.

History will judge CT for its response as viewed through the eyes of the law. Do not memorialize these senseless killings by also killing Freedom in the process.

One concept I ask the commission to ponder: Why did this legislature abolish the death penalty for violent gun crimes? *Especially* following the Cheshire home invasion. Did that make our children safer?

2. Punishing LEGAL gun owners is not the answer!

-The proposed 50% tax on ammunition is unfair and discriminatory in nature.

How does that help our children?

-Arbitrary limits on magazine capacity will not do anything but make law-abiding citizens and their children more vulnerable. Criminals will have more firepower than citizens. How does that help our children?

-The proposed single-shot only option is ridiculous! Whom does that serve? It will hurt families, is a HUGE infringement in the ability to keep and bear arms. How does that help children?

-The proposal to register all firearms is a bad idea. Besides being a costly, administrative nightmare, it exposes citizens to undue risk. What happens when these lists fall into the wrong hands? Computer systems get hacked every day. A newspaper could publish that list and the crime spree will begin. If there were another terrorist attack, the perpetrators could use this registry to target gun owners. Let's be clear, Gun registration has one purpose, it is the pre-cursor to confiscation and disarming lawful citizens. One only has to look to history to see why we can't repeat that mistake. Not in CT, not in America.

3. Demonizing the AR-15 service rifle (what you call an assault rifle) is wrong. This crusade was started ^{by} an ill-advised group. Respectfully, people who know nothing about these firearms should not be drafting laws to ban them. I request that you engage firearms experts to gain knowledge and inform thoughtful proposals, not arbitrary bans to try to eliminate them.

For your information the AR-15 service rifle is used in target matches run by the Civilian Marksmanship Program. The CMP was started by the US Congress over a hundred years ago and was re-invented by the US Congress in 1996. National Matches are held each year at Camp Perry in Ohio which draws thousands of CMP competitors, many of them include youth teams. You need 20 round magazines to properly hold the rifle during the offhand position of these matches. I hope the committee members will research this organization

and understand that they promote gun safety, marksmanship, and youth education? They are good, hard-working, tax-paying people.

I ask that in your research you understand the claim that *"there is no valid use for this rifle in today's civilized world"* is both wrong and insulting.

I challenge the commission to show CT citizens one shred of data, or one fact that explains why you feel a plastic pistol grip makes a rifle more dangerous? You can't, because it doesn't! It is an arbitrary stipulation and does not make any sense. Same goes for the other banned "features". When was the last mass-bayonetting? Never, yet bayonet mounts are part of the justification for AWB's. Why is this arbitrary criteria used for banning an entire class of weapons?

4. The Second amendment was written for a reason. The US Constitution AND Connecticut Constitution guarantee citizens the RIGHT to bear arms and protect themselves. The founding fathers penned those rights for a reason, and it has nothing to do with deer hunting. It has everything to do with protecting citizens. The proposed gun control bills create many significant infringements and do not respect the law of the land, or the RIGHTS of legal gun owners.

More gun law restrictions will only hurt CT residents by:

Making citizens less safe (bad guys will have more firepower)

It will harm the CT economy and local businesses.

It will greatly increase State administration costs at a time when budgets are stretched.

It will mean less tax revenue due to lost sales.

CT will lose jobs as gun makers, gun stores, and ammunition sellers go elsewhere.

Citizens will move away to more gun-friendly states, making the state less and less safe.

5. SUGGESTIONS to help keep our children safe:

As a parent and gun owner, I advocate background checks for gun purchases (not ammunition). I advocate pistol permits and providing gun safety education for all. Lockable safes for firearms are also a good idea.

But we already have those laws in CT. Let's enforce them, and punish violent gun crimes with the stiffest of penalties as a firm deterrent. We need to bring back the death penalty.

To keep our children safe, we need to educate them in the ways of gun safety. We need to show them the devastating effects of what guns can do, instead of handing them violent video games as their only gun training.

I advocate having police officers in schools. I support ending "gun free" zones- they obviously do not help keep children safe. Just think of how Newtown could have been different if a parent or teacher was present with legal a concealed carry firearm.

I ask that you look hard at the mental health industry and at the root causes of violence such as the violent images on screen and bullying in schools.

In closing, please don't ask the legal gun owners to pay for the sins of the evil-doers in our society. Please do not forget that CT's history is rooted in the gun industry, thanks to names like Colt, Remington, Ruger, Marlin, Mossberg, Winchester, and many others.

CT legislators, I pray that you use sound judgment, restraint, research, facts, and knowledge in your evaluation of proposals for any new gun legislation. I pray that you not follow NY's criminal legislative example which will surely be overturned in the courts. I pray that you consider the future generation's rights and uphold the second amendment freedoms in the US and CT Constitutions, as you have been SWORN to do, even if you are not personally a gun owner, and even if you disagree with said rights.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry D. Altman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Henry D. Altman, AIA

Killingworth, CT