

To the committee for a safer Connecticut,

As we all know, our state has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. After the Newtown tragedy, it is understandable that everybody wants to do something to prevent something like that from ever happening again. While it is virtually impossible to prevent tragedies like that, there are some meaningful steps that can be taken that will reduce the likelihood of them. The first step one would propose would be to enforce the gun laws on the books. Impose tougher sentences for offenders who commit crimes that involve firearms and make them serve their full sentences. No plea bargain deals, no early releases. Three strikes should be punishable with a life sentence. Reinstate the death penalty for the most heinous crimes. Want to make the streets safer? Keep the bad guys off them. Step two would require instant background checks on firearms purchases to include access to mental health records. No reasonable person should have any problem with that. People who lie on purchase applications should be punished. Step three would be to beef up security at schools. Retired military, retired law enforcement, and other trained personnel could be enlisted to form a volunteer security force for schools. Even unarmed security with police radios could act as a deterrent, and be the eyes and ears the police. Each town could decide the level of security it would want for its schools. Training and equipment for the program could be paid for by the volunteers but offset by the state in the form of tax credits. Everybody wins. On the other hand, banning certain firearms and magazines would have a negligible effect on crime, a fact proven by a Center for Disease Control study on the effectiveness of firearms laws in preventing violence <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5214a2.htm>. All one has to do is look at Chicago, DC, NYC and see the proof. Politics and emotions aside, taxes and restrictions on ammunition, gun registration, banning certain firearms and other excessive measures proposed in this bill would not have prevented the tragedy at Newton, nor would it serve to prevent another one, but surely you realize that. They certainly won't bring those kids back. These measures are merely political and serve no purpose other than to infringe upon the rights of law abiding citizens. Driving gun manufacturers out of the state will mean less jobs and less revenue, 2 things desperately needed given our state's poor economic condition. Nobody wants CT to be a safer place more than me. I raised my 3 children here, and I now have grand children. That is why I implore you not to waste time with laws that will do absolutely nothing to make anyone safer. Before rushing to pass meaningless and ineffective legislation, please ask yourself this; Do you want to stop the criminals rather than turn law abiding citizens into criminals? Does the safety of our children outweigh your political agendas? If your answer is yes, then you must vote no for SB 161.

Sincerely,
Jack Kavanaugh
Groton, CT