

February 11, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Full Disclosure: I support and believe in the general protections of the 2nd amendment, while at the same time there being no need for me personally to have a weapon for either target practice or for protection. I have NO horse in this race; the following is based on my own experiences and research since the event at Sandy Hook.

Semi-automatic “assault rifles”: Prior to the deplorable tragedy in December, I guess I could say that I was generally unaware of what weapons were available in the civilian population other than that full automatic weapons were prohibited. I now feel that semi-automatic long rifle weapons have no place, with appropriate exclusions for law enforcement uses. Having fired both the M-16 and .45 pistol while in the Army (both are technically considered semi-automatic), my experiences were that it takes much more time to overcome the recoil and to then come back on target with the pistol than with the M-16 (civilian counterpart is the AR-15 from what I recall). To me this is understandable in that there is only one point of body contact, with the pistol being gripped in one hand even if this hand is stabilized using the other hand. The semi-automatic long rifle, on the other hand, has several points of body contact – front grip, rear pistol grip, and either the shoulder or the hip/waist – thus providing much more stability and, combined with its limited recoil, subsequent ability to quickly re-acquire a target. Thus, the semi-automatic long rifle has the capability to deliver more accurate fire and at a high rate.

High capacity magazines: I was shocked to learn that apparently there are magazines capable of holding 50 or more(?) rounds available to civilians. When I served in Vietnam and carried an M-16, we had 20 round magazines. 20 rounds was deemed a “combat load”. That said, there can be NO justification to have magazines which have a capacity even close to this number of rounds available to the civilian population. I realize that there is talk out there of a 10 round limit to all magazines. I am not sure where this number came from or what it is based on, but it still seems to me to be too high – therefore I see a need to encourage a discussion on maximum number of rounds to include magazines for both long rifles and for hand-held weapons (pistols).

.223 ammunition: from what I have found through online research, this ammunition is useable for only 2 types of weapons – “varmint” rifles (bolt action) and semi-automatic long rifles. The rounds themselves apparently fragment and then ricochet inside the target after encountering a harder substance such as bones; there apparently is one brand that apparently fragments when encountering organic matter, i.e. a body. I personally am haunted by what must have been the effect on the small bodies of the children murdered by this ammunition. This information has served to reinforce my conclusion on the semi-automatic long rifles (above) – there is absolutely no need for such a destructive combination of rifle and ammunition to be available in the civilian arena.

I ask myself whether a prohibition on semi-automatic long rifles and high capacity magazines would have prevented the tragedy at Sandy Hook; sadly, I don't think it would have stopped some nut job intent on going out in his own version of “a blaze of glory” from doing something.

However, I feel that the number of casualties may very well have been less than what we are all currently having to deal with.

Based upon the foregoing, I fully support efforts to prevent the sale of semi-automatic long rifles to the civilian population and to limit the size of magazines to far less than 20 rounds, applicable to both long rifles AND to handguns. In addition, we MUST look into some method to identify and deal with the mentally deficient and dangerous portion of the population, to get them off the streets, even involuntarily, so that they pose no threat to the majority of citizens whose rights to live also need to be protected. In addition, there has to be some action taken to restrict the content in violent video games and the gratuitous violence in certain movies which can serve to dehumanize the process of taking of someone's life. We all have a right to not be killed and this right far usurps someone else's right of "free speech" in producing such garbage, or some supposed "stigma" in being identified as a threat to society due to having a dangerous mental condition.

I do not envy the challenges you face in addressing these, and similar, issues. My best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

James C. Todd
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