

Members of the Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety Bi-Partisan Taskforce,

My name is James Coffman, and I am a resident of the town of Westport CT for the last 10 years, a husband of 12 years, and a father of four year-old fraternal twin boys. While I have led a relatively ordinary and fortunate upper middle class life and residing in many different towns and cities around the country, I have also personally been touched a number of times by gun violence. I cannot help but wonder how many of the following gun horrors I have witnessed, which I highlight below, might have been prevented with some common sense regulations.

1. When I was a young child, I was awoken by a terrible fight between when my mother and father. When I wandered into their bedroom, I saw my father standing over my mother pointing his 38 caliber revolver at her head and threatening to kill her. He was drunk and high on drugs. Luckily, my presence jarred him and he put the gun down and left. Had laws been in place eliminating the right of gun ownership for those convicted of domestic violence and illegal drug use, perhaps my father would not have been able to threaten my mother's life at gun point.
2. In the fourth grade, I remember the day I looked out my classroom window and watched a police car pull up to our school. A few minutes later, that policeman and our school principal came to pull a girl out of my class. I can remember to do this day that girl crying uncontrollably when she was told that her older brother had accidentally killed himself with their father's gun. Had sensible laws been in place requiring gun owners with minor children to properly secure their firearms, maybe my classmate's brother would be alive today.
3. In High School, a friend of mine lost her mother to suicide. Her mother had been battling depression for some time, and she ended up using the gun her father kept as protection for their family store to kill herself. Had my friend's father been required by law to keep the gun only at his business, or properly secured within the home given he resided with someone mentally ill, perhaps my friend's mother would still be alive.
4. In College, a friend of mine was hit by a stray bullet in a random drive-by shooting. While my friend thankfully survived, he remains paralyzed and breaths with the aid of a ventilator. Had the criminal who shot my friend been sentenced to a much longer jail term for his previous violent crimes, perhaps my friend would be leading a healthier and more vibrant life.

While I am not naive enough to believe that stricter gun laws alone will eliminate the epidemic of violence that plagues our State and our Nation, I do strongly believe that certain commonsense regulations can help to significantly improve public safety. The fact that gun deaths and violence are dramatically lower in nations that have much stronger firearms restrictions than the United States like the UK, Australia, Japan, etc., cannot be ignored. Those countries took dramatic steps to ban certain types of firearms after similar tragedies to Newtown, and have had significantly fewer, or zero, mass shootings sense those laws were put in place. Even in the United States, the numbers of gun deaths and violent crimes in States with loose gun laws versus those with stricter gun laws is overwhelming. While we certainly need to re-evaluate other potential factors in gun violence like how we diagnose and treat the mentally ill, as well as re-examine the pervasive violence in our media and entertainment, we need to be very careful about how many other "Rights" we trample in order to preserve the sanctity of the Second Amendment. Guns are tools

that are designed to kill, and they are tremendously efficient and effective at achieving their purpose. As such, they need to be more carefully controlled. If more guns equals less crime, than surely the United States of America with nearly enough guns for every man, woman and child would be the safest place on earth. Unfortunately, our nation has by far the worst gun deaths of the ‘developed’ world.

While the Second Amendment of our Constitution recognizes the right to keep and bear arms, and the Supreme Court its decision in the DC versus Heller case upheld the “individual” as opposed to the “collective” interpretation, the right is not absolute. Justice Scalia wrote in his opinion,

“Like most rights, the right secured by the [Second Amendment](#) is not unlimited. From Blackstone through the 19th-century cases, commentators and courts routinely explained that the right was not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose. See, *e.g.*, *Sheldon*, in 5 Blume 346; Rawle 123; Pomeroy 152-153; Abbott 333. For example, the majority of the 19th-century courts to consider the question held that prohibitions on carrying concealed weapons were lawful under the [Second Amendment](#) or state analogues. See, *e.g.*, *State v. Chandler*, 5 La. Ann., at 489-490; *Nunn v. State*, 1 Ga., at 251; see generally 2 Kent *340, n. 2; The American Students’ Blackstone 84, n. 11 (G. Chase ed. 1884). Although we do not undertake an exhaustive historical analysis today of the full scope of the [Second Amendment](#), nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.²⁶ We also recognize another important limitation on the right to keep and carry arms. *Miller* said, as we have explained, that the sorts of weapons protected were those “in common use at the time.” 307 U. S., at 179. We think that limitation is fairly supported by the historical tradition of prohibiting the carrying of “dangerous and unusual weapons.”

As such, I strongly believe that the most effective way to reduce gun violence is to have much stronger regulations and controls over firearms sales, possession and use. As Justice Scalia stated above, many of the commonsense regulations already proposed President Barak Obama and Vice President Biden, and which I support, would not be in violation of our constitutional rights. More specifically, I support.

1. The ban of military style semi-automatic assault rifles such as the Bushmaster AR 15
2. The ban of large capacity magazines that serve little purpose beyond the ability to inflict mass carnage and are neither necessary for self-defense or hunting. Limit ammunition magazines to under 10 rounds.
3. Universal Background checks on all firearms sales, gifts or transfers eliminating the so-called “gun show loophole” and strengthen the background check system for gun sales.
4. Restrict the caliber of ammunition that can be purchased as well as armor piercing bullets.

5. Restrict the amount of firearms and ammunition that can be purchased during a given period.
6. Require registration of all firearms and require gun owners to maintain a license or certificate evidencing that they are a citizen in good standing and not prohibited from gun ownership. I believe having a registration of firearms will also cut down on straw-purchases which is the primary means of funneling illegal guns to criminals.
7. Empower law enforcement and give them the additional tools to prevent and prosecute gun crimes.
8. Appropriate monies for gun violence research.
9. Ensure quality coverage of mental health treatment, and restrict the ability of anyone under serious mental illness or taking psychiatric medications from possessing firearms. Even if a gun owner is mentally competent, they should be restricted from having a firearm in their home if they reside with someone who is mentally ill.
10. Make our schools safer with new resource officers and more school psychologists, better emergency response plan and more nurturing school climates.

As the saying goes, we need to think globally but act locally. The debate may rage in Washington for months if not years to come, but we can take the steps necessary now to make the State of Connecticut safer for all, and especially for our children.

Thank you allowing me the opportunity to express my views.

Respectfully,
James Coffman
21 Dover Road
Westport, CT

James R Coffman | Managing Director | Global Credit Risk Mgmt - Asset Managers and Funds | **J.P. Morgan** | 383 Madison Ave, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10179 | Tel: 212.270.5608 | Mobile: 917.822.1440 | james.r.coffman@jpmorgan.com

This email is confidential and subject to important disclaimers and conditions including on offers for the purchase or sale of securities, accuracy and completeness of information, viruses, confidentiality, legal privilege, and legal entity disclaimers, available at <http://www.jpmorgan.com/pages/disclosures/email>.