

I am a Monroe resident and unfortunately am not able to attend tonight's meeting in Newtown, but wanted to lend my voice to the discussion. The following and the attached comments are based on views I shared with Vice President Biden, Speaker John Boehner, Senator Blumenthal and Congressman Jim Himes earlier this month on gun violence prevention.

I grew up with a gun in the house as a child. I see the need for protection, however, I believe we as a society should be willing to broaden the discussion and take the needs of the greater community into account. My view is that we should look at all of the conditions leading to the unspeakable evil that occurred in Newtown -- the availability of guns, ammunition and body armor, the mental health system, cultural influences in our society, school security. Attached are my suggestions for what to include in the discussion so that we come at this from a reasonable and inclusive point of view. I am no expert, and am sure there are other factors to consider, but I came at this from what I view the weaknesses to be and some logical steps to strengthen them. If any of my ideas spark further discussion and better ideas, well that is my goal.

My point is, we need look at it all and err on the side of safety for our kids when deciding on how to act. Do what can be done now, and keep examining the issue as you go. Maybe some things won't work, but they should be considered and addressed, not dismissed out of hand because they may be difficult, unpleasant or unpopular. Our problem here is complex and many issues are interconnected. These are big topics that one law or discussion will not solve. We need all ideas to be put forward and we will need to implement changes in phases if we have to. Changing peoples mindsets is not easy, but it can be done over time with thoughtful discussion and education as to what works. It will take continued efforts to get this right but if we don't act now to do what we think might help, we are risking more of the same kind of horror that descended on Newtown. We must keep the process going to monitor successes and failures, then make adjustments and improvements.

Twenty families in Newtown lost a child on December 14. Six other families lost women who died to protect them. My heart aches for them all. Let the memory of these lost souls be the thing that brings this country together to work towards real change in our society. Let us all work towards eliminating gun violence in earnest. Please, lets put politics aside and get this done right. Saving lives needs to be the highest priority in a thoughtful debate. We owe that to the memory of those who were lost and to the children who look to us to keep them safe.

Respectfully,

Jan Freddino
Monroe, CT