

Written testimony for the public hearing on gun safety, submitted by Jennifer Killin, Newtown, CT.

We have an epidemic of gun violence in the United States when compared to every other developed country. We have more guns per capita, and more gun-related deaths. Never has that been more clear than on December 14, 2012, when 20 children and 6 educators from my hometown were slaughtered in cold blood.

There are a lot of unknowns when it comes to gun violence, because in the '80's and '90's when CDC studies found that households with guns were three times more likely to have homicides and five times more likely to have suicides than homes without guns, the gun lobby made sure that funding for research was withdrawn. Now they are telling us that the guns aren't the problem; that it's the violent movies and video games; that more guns will make us safer, that most gun owners are responsible and really the problem is the mentally ill. But that is all fear-mongering and lies. British children play just as many violent video games, and watch the same Hollywood movies, and yet, there were only 35 gun-related deaths in all of Britain last year! Why? Because it's extremely difficult to own a gun legally in Britain. More guns will not make us safer, but it will make the gun lobby richer. They are interested in their bottom line, and that is all. The Supreme Court has stated that the right to bear arms is not unlimited, so placing restrictions on gun ownership and use is perfectly Constitutional.

Yes, we need better care for the mentally ill, but mental health is still an evolving field, and there is a lot we don't know. I do think that there should be a national database that integrates mental health and criminal backgrounds, so that the mentally ill cannot purchase weapons. However, this system will be extremely limited. It would not have stopped Adam Lanza, because he used guns that belonged to his mother. It would not have stopped Nehemiah Griego, who shot and killed 5 of his family members in Albuquerque recently, because not only did he use his father's guns, but he had no history of mental health issues.

We are told often that criminals will find a way to get weapons anyway, so stronger laws will only punish law-abiding gun owners. But criminals are inherently lazy and opportunistic. Make a crime even marginally more difficult to commit, and the incidences of such crimes plummet. Furthermore, few mass shooters have prior records. They are not criminals until the shooting. Common criminals commit crimes from which they expect to profit. Mass shooters never profit.

Guns are inherently dangerous. Their purpose is to kill. The purpose of assault weapons is to kill as many people as possible, in as short a time as possible. They have no place in the hands of civilians, for hunting or defense.

The gun lobby says that the only thing that will stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun, but that is only in a perfect world. NYPD officers involved in gunfights only hit their target an average of 18% of the time! A so-called good guy

with a gun is far more likely to shoot an innocent person. There was one person that was armed at Gabby Giffords' event in Tucson, and he nearly mistook a bystander for the shooter. A bystander that ended up tackling the shooter when he paused to reload.

I am not a knee-jerk reactionary. I have read a lot about gun violence. I pay attention, and I don't listen to propaganda. There is no doubt in my mind that stronger gun laws will work, and the rest of the country is looking to CT to see what we will do. Here is what I propose, in addition to what President Obama proposed:

- A limit on the amount of ammunition that can be purchased. No one should be able to purchase 400 rounds at once. Or 100 rounds.
- A limit on the number of guns one may purchase; 1 gun/month.
- An aggressive buyback program: a ban on future sales and manufacturing of assault weapons will have little benefit when there are already thousands in civilian hands.
- Gun manufacturers and retailers should be held accountable for their products and to whom they sell them. If a gun misfires or discharges accidentally (this has happened quite a few times at gun shows just in the last week!), they should be liable for damages. We recall toys and strollers and Bumbo seats when children get hurt, even when the people are clearly at fault because they ignored warnings. Why are guns not subject to the same Product Safety standards?!
- Gun owners should be held accountable for any crimes or accidents committed with guns that are registered to them.
- Make gun trafficking a felony.
- Ban on automatic and semi-automatic weapons in public. No grandfathering. These are not needed for hunting, and if people want them for home defense, there is no reason they should leave the home.
- Mandatory gun safety training for all gun owners.
- Mandatory gun registration for all firearms.
- Mandatory gun locks on all guns, all gun owners.
- Guns in the home must be properly stored so that children and others cannot access them.
- Anyone that has been convicted of a violent crime shall be banned from owning any firearm.
- All gun laws shall be effective immediately.

Thank you for your attention on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,  
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