

Dear Senator Looney, Representative Miner and members of the Gun Violence Prevention Group,

My name is Jessica Nardine. I live in Winsted, CT and would like to submit my testimony regarding gun laws in our state. I would like to begin by saying that my husband attended the meeting in Hartford on Monday and I was planning to attend the meeting in Newtown tonight, but just could not bring myself to do it. I truly believe that this hearing being held in Newtown is in poor taste and only reopens wounds that this town is trying desperately to heal. It feels like a political ploy to push an agenda at the expense of a grieving town. It's exploitation. Plain and simple. As a teacher, mom, and person with a heart, I have cried more tears for people that I've never met than I could have ever imagined possible. So to go into their heart-broken town and speak against many of the current bills seems heartless and cruel, and I just could not do it.

First, I would like to say that I am very much in favor of universal background checks. In CT we already have extensive checks when purchased from a dealer, but I do believe all loopholes, particularly through private sales, need to be closed.

Second, I would like to say, for me, I do not see the need for a magazine with a capacity of 20 or 30 rounds, but I also do not know that the government should have the right to prevent law abiding, mentally sound citizens from owning one. I also have never been in a situation, thank GOD, where I have needed to protect my family or property from hordes meaning to do harm. I do work with a man though who has lived through two riots in his lifetime in which he is convinced it was his rifle out the second story window that kept the criminals away. I pray to God that I am never in that situation especially if half of these ridiculous restrictions pass.

I've heard lots of statistics and hard numbers thrown around, but it is important to remember that ANY statistic can be skewed to fit a person's agenda. One number I've heard anti-gun supporters talk about a lot is 9000. The number of gun related deaths in the country last year. (I have not verified that number, I am just using the one I keep hearing). My question is, how many of those deaths were due to magazines of high capacity? And how many of those deaths were committed at the hands of law-abiding citizens with legally owned guns? That's a number I would be interested in hearing.

Like many other speakers at the Hartford hearing I am concerned that legislation is being proposed, and seemingly pushed through, without the final report from Newtown, making this a knee jerk reaction to a tragic, tragic event.

Lets face it. The true problem here is mental health. How many of these mass shootings were committed by people with mental health issues? How much money has been drained out of the mental health system in this state in the past 20 years? Instead of spending millions and millions of dollars trying to enforce unrealistic, unfair laws that will only punish law abiding citizens, you need to put this money back into mental health programs. To talk about passing more restrictions on gun owners without putting a serious effort into improving mental health care is like talking about tax hikes without talking about cutting spending! Rather than dealing with the problem, you are just shifting responsibility/blame.

The Second Amendment reads: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." It doesn't include exceptions, or stipulations in case the government wants to change it. In fact, in 2008 the Supreme Court upheld the Second Amendment and the rights of an individual right to possess and carry firearms.

But more importantly are the words of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.." You may have your own ideas regarding gun laws. But

this is not about you - or your ideals. You have been elected by citizens to represent them. Despite the media's refusal to accurately report the facts, the fact, is the overwhelming majority of people in Hartford were NOT in favor of placing more restrictions on law abiding, mentally stable citizens. They were in favor of background checks and improving mental health, but not restricting laws on those who have done nothing to warrant it.

As Mark Mattioli, whose 6-year-old son was killed at Sandy Hook, said "It's a simple concept. We need civility across our nation. What we're seeing are symptoms of a bigger problem. This is a symptom. The problem is not gun laws. The problem is a lack of civility." Restricting guns will not change that. The true problem i.e. mental health needs to be addressed.

Thank you for your time.  
Jessica Nardine