

Dear Senators, Representatives and work group members,

I may not be able to attend this hearing due to prior work commitments. It is unfortunate that a hearing of this magnitude could not have been scheduled at a time which would make it easier and more realistic that more of the general public could attend and voice their opinions. Instead, I am sending this email in hopes that my voice may be heard.

First, let me say that I was absolutely outraged by the horrific event in Newtown. This tragedy left me speechless and deeply saddened. I truly hope that all those affected by this will someday find peace.

However, this heinous act committed by a mentally deranged madman should not be used to criminalize law abiding and responsible gun owners. Instead, the focus should be on improving mental health care, strengthening the existing criminal background check system and enforcing the thousands upon thousands of existing gun laws.

How would banning so-called assault weapons, limiting magazine capacities, forcing gun owners to have additional insurance or taxing ammunition have prevented the Newtown shooting? They would not have. We are talking about a psychopath who obtained guns illegally and murdered his own mother before murdering (26) innocent victims. I doubt that he would have been concerned about breaking a few gun control laws along the way. We all know how many deaths drunk driving accounts for. Do we then try to ban alcohol or cars from being used by law abiding motorists? No, we punish the drunk driver. When a child is harmed while in a State's Foster Care system, do we punish every parent in the state? No, we punish the offenders. Why then would responsible gun owners be punished for crimes they do not commit?

I have already contacted my State Senator and Representative to voice my opposition to many of the individual Senate and House bills being proposed. Additional gun control laws will only erode my 2nd Amendment rights. They will not reduce violence. In fact, violent crime with firearms has declined since the Federal assault weapons ban expired in 2004. My legally owned firearms and accessories pose a threat to no one.

Many of the interviews I have seen and read in the past several weeks have seemed to have a common theme....we need to do *something*. I disagree with that generalization. Instead, we need to do the right thing. Forcing additional regulations on law abiding responsible gun owners that are not committing the crimes we see in the news everyday is surely not the right thing. In closing, I would like you to read the following excerpt that I received via email. I believe this sums up my sentiment beautifully:

Who is responsible for the 26 horrific deaths at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012?

Was it a misguided mother who taught her mentally unstable son how to shoot pistols and rifles starting at age 9? Was it a careless mother who, as far as we know, somehow left unlocked several of her own guns lying around her house within reach of her unstable now-20 year old son?

Was it a distraught mother who, knowing her son needed psychological help, left evidence of her intention to have him committed where her unstable son could see that she was about to sign him over to a conservator? Was it an unstable, mentally ill 20-yr old confused young man who stole guns and shot his own mother 4 times in her face with depraved indifference?

Was it a crazed 20-year-old monster who, now armed with illegally obtained guns, deliberately drove to a school to commit multiple murder for no known reason?

These are the two people with whom the responsibility for these 26 deaths lies.

The responsibility does not lie with Connecticut's law-abiding responsible patriot gun owners. The responsibility does not lie with Connecticut's valid gun permit holders.

The responsibility does not lie with Connecticut's safe hunters or avid gun collectors. The responsibility does not lie with retired police officers. The responsibility does not lie with armed forces veterans.

The responsibility does not lie with the law-abiding members of the National Rifle Association or the Gun Owners of America or The Second Amendment Foundation or the Connecticut Citizens Defense League.

Yet, currently proposed legislation is aimed at all of the above who are NOT responsible in order to punish them for the acts of a lone madman caused by the failure of the mental health system and a misguided, careless parent that led to the deaths of 26 innocent souls in the most heinous crime in Connecticut history.

We ask that you not let your anger at the killer, or his mother for being so careless, or your emotional reaction at the horrible loss of 26 angels cause you to punish the thousands of law-abiding citizens of this state by trampling on our civil rights guaranteed under the Constitution and especially the 2nd Amendment. We ask you to think about this with reason and without the deep emotion that we all share, and come to the conclusion that the patriots in Connecticut that possess the legal right to keep and bear arms be afforded those rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and the Connecticut state constitution.

The Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights: "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."

The Constitution of the state of Connecticut, Section 15: "Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state."

"Those who hammer their guns into plows will plow for those who do not." - Thomas Jefferson

"You won't get gun control by disarming law-abiding citizens. There's only one way to get real gun control: Disarm the thugs and the criminals, lock them up, and if you don't actually throw away the key, at least lose it for a long time... It's a nasty truth, but those who seek to inflict harm are not fazed by gun controllers. I happen to know this from personal experience." - Ronald Reagan, 1983

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

Jim Fantoli
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