

Dear Members of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention,

Allow me to start off by stating that I am not a member of the National Rifle Association, nor am I a member of any organization that would classify as a "gun rights group." I do not represent the firearms industry; I do not work in the firearms industry, and I do not own stock in the firearms industry. I am a private, law abiding citizen who happens to own firearms, and the following testimony reflects the opinions countless tens if not hundreds of thousands of law abiding gun owners in the state of Connecticut.

I agree with the notion that firearms must be kept out of the hands of the irresponsible, the mentally ill, and criminals. I also agree that this country must take serious, concrete action to prevent further tragedies like the shooting at Sandy Hook. Any reasonable person would agree with these points. However, when taking such measures, it is critically important to address the actual problem. The fact of the matter is, the murderer Adam Lanza would not have been stopped by any of the proposed "assault weapons bans" or "high capacity magazine bans," just as the murderers of Columbine were not stopped by the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban. Remember that the Columbine shooters had only one weapon capable of accepting "large capacity magazines," but that the specific weapon was BANNED at the time of its acquisition and that they acquired it ILLEGALLY.

In spite of this, even if Adam Lanza did not have an AR-15, he would have used a shotgun; if he did not have access to so-called "high capacity magazines," he simply would have brought more magazines and kept reloading much like the 2007 Virginia Tech shooter. Both would have resulted in the same tragic end state. Neither the '94 nor the proposed assault weapons ban would have changed this.

This being the case, I believe any reasonable person would agree that no lives would be saved by a magazine ban or assault weapons ban. Indeed, among states that have assault weapon bans or magazine restrictions along the lines of what is being proposed for Connecticut, there is NO discernable effect on gun crime in comparison to those without assault weapon bans. This information is taken directly from the FBI's uniform crime statistics.

Common sense would suggest that attempting to tackle this problem by attacking what types of firearms or ammunition feeding devices are legally available would NOT save lives.

What, then, would such legislation achieve?

Before we address that question, let us look at just whom it would affect.

Many have asked, "why do we need 'assault weapons' or 'high capacity magazines'? Is there any legitimate use for them?"

The answer to that would be yes, in fact, there are many legitimate uses for them. Many types of shooting sport and competition require the shooter to use magazines with capacities greater than 10 rounds, and rifles like the AR-15. Most modern hand guns made for self defense have a STANDARD capacity of greater than 10 rounds.

You may argue, "Why would you need more than 10 rounds or an assault weapon to defend yourself?"

In a stressful situation such as a home invasion, accuracy decreases significantly: statistics from a New York Police Department study showed that over a two year period (2006-2007), the "hit rate" for TRAINED police officers was at its greatest 28.3% and at its lowest a mere 17%. Who is to say there will be only one assailant? According to the FBI, over 40% of sexual assaults involve multiple attackers, between 12% and 40% (accounting for unknown number) of murders involve multiple attackers. If faced with multiple attackers, ten rounds may not be nearly sufficient to neutralize them. It must also be noted that there are many documented cases of police officers having to shoot an attacker more than ten times due to their being on drugs. Remember also that AR-15s can and have been used to defend the homes of law abiding citizens on numerous occasions, as they are especially suitable for individuals of a smaller build due to their simplicity of use, accuracy, and low recoil.

There indeed ARE legitimate uses for "high capacity magazines" and "assault weapons". The passing of legislation limiting them would do absolutely nothing to save our children's lives and do everything to reduce the ability of law abiding citizens to defend themselves and their families, as well as effectively render the hobbies of many thousands of people illegal. Such a bill does literally no good and all harm.

Keep in mind that I have only spoken on the subject of "assault weapons" and "high capacity magazines" and that I never once made the argument that no new laws of any kind should be passed. On the contrary, I believe that there is much that our senators and representatives could be do to make our children safer.

Among the proposed legislation is the idea of universal background checks, of stricter mental health measures, and stricter laws on ensuring that your firearms are secured, be it with a lock or inside of a safe. I and most gun owners would absolutely agree with such measures. Indeed, I would go even further to propose a state-funded program to provide gun safes to firearms owners that want them. This, in addition to the work being done by the committees on mental health and school safety, would go a very long way in protecting the innocent and actually saving lives.

To summarize my view, legislation should be focused not on the types of firearms available or on how many bullets can fit into a magazine, but on who has access to firearms in the first place. Focusing on the former does nothing to solve the problem at hand while managing to penalize law abiding citizens, men and women more likely to help protect your children than ever cause them harm.

I thank you for reviewing my testimony on this very important subject.

Sincerely,

John Agnese

Hamden, CT